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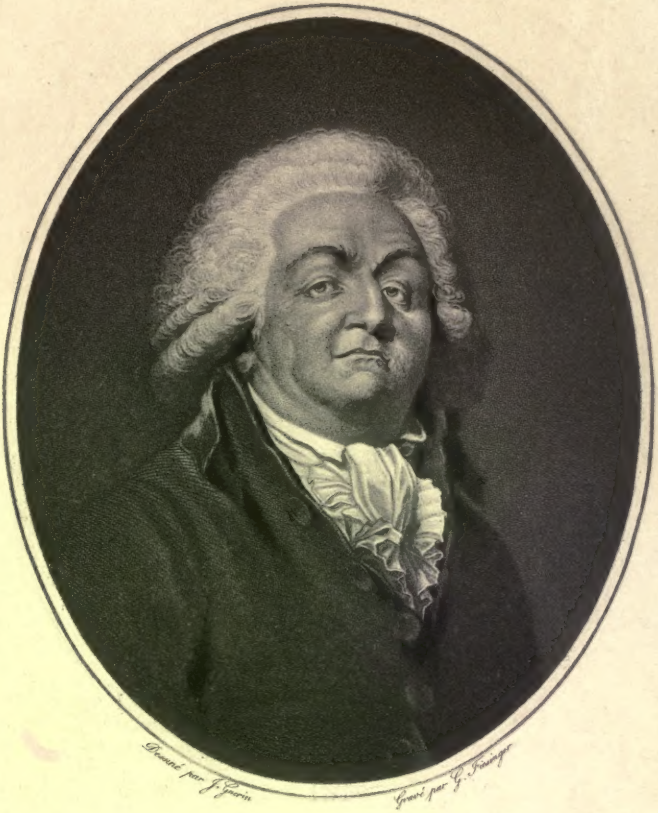

H. G. MIRABEAU

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The Life of Mirabeau

By

S. G. Tallentyre (pseud.)

Author of "The Life of Voltaire," "The Friends of Voltaire," etc.

Sa destiné est un orage continuel et sa vie un roman.—MIRABEAU

First American Edition

Reprinted from the Second English Edition

With Portraits

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press
1912

425615
7.7.44

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

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THE LIFE OF MIRABEAU

CHAPTER I

HOME

THE two great representative Frenchmen of the eighteenth century are Voltaire and Mirabeau.

Voltaire was the last great influence of the old order, and Mirabeau the first of the new.

Voltaire, more than any other one man, undammed the torrent of Revolution. Mirabeau used all the strength of his mighty genius to turn those rushing waters into the channel of use, of wisdom, and of safety.

Wholly un-English in his fierce passions, in the burning inspirations which were at once his strength and his weakness, his making and his undoing, Mirabeau yet particularly commands the admiration of Englishmen by those qualities of sound practical sagacity and large foresight which have been the especial virtues of their own statesmen, but not often those of the political leaders of France.

For all men, in all history, there is surely no personality so dominant and so striking, so grand and so pitiably human, so greatly raised and yet so

greatly fallen, as Gabriel-Honoré de Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau.

He was born on March 9, 1749, at Bignon, a little village between Nemours and Montargis, and conveniently near to Paris.

But his birth here was, as it were, an accident. His family was of Provençal origin, although Victor, Marquis of Mirabeau, his father, proudly proclaimed the Riquettis to be Arrighettis, noble exiles from Florence in the thirteenth century; and haughtily added that the only blot on their scutcheon was a marriage with the Medici. But the fact remains that the first of the family of whom there is any certain knowledge was Jean, a manufacturer of Marseilles, who bought the castle and estate of Mirabeau, near Aix-en-Provence, in 1550, and took its name. His great-grandson, Honoré, was the first Marquis of Mirabeau. Honoré's son, the great Mirabeau's grandfather and the second Marquis, was a fine, handsome, dare-devil officer of the Duc de Vendôme. *His* son, the great Mirabeau's father, was fit product of what he called "my tempestuous race." Handsome and aristocratic in appearance, drunk with pride and cleverness, undisciplined in energies and in temper—one of the worst and strongest influences upon his son's destiny and character, and so in any history of that son to be greatly taken into account—this was Victor de Riquetti, Marquis de Mirabeau.

Born in 1715, he had been at school with the Jesuits at Aix-en-Provence and had had as school-fellow Vauvenargues, hereafter the pure and pagan philosopher—one of the wisest and gentlest souls of his

generation. Victor, on the other hand, was from the first a wild and dissolute boy, always disreputable and obstreperous, never a sou in his pocket, and loud regrets on his lips for sins he made not the slightest attempt to forego. Presently he had a commission in his father's regiment. Then he went to an academy in Paris, and was idle, wicked, and dissipated; fell in love with an actress, and then on an impulse and the mad idea, which ran through all the actions of his mad life, of raising the importance of his family, married an heiress, Mademoiselle Marie-Geneviève de Vassan. It was only characteristic of him that though he took her solely to keep the house of Mirabeau in wealth and perpetuity, yet in his headlong impetuosity he signed a marriage settlement not at all advantageous to his own interests. Insanity was strongly in Mademoiselle de Vassan's family, and she had been very badly brought up. A lively, slatternly chatterbox, lazy and extravagant, warm-hearted and jealous, a very weak mind and very strong passions —if the Marquis had searched the world over he could hardly have found a woman so disastrous to his own happiness, or so fatal a mother for Mirabeau.

At the time of the marriage, in 1743, the young Marquis (he was eight-and-twenty years old) had already dissipated most of his patrimony in riotous living and in the purchase of the estate of Bignon. But this inconvenient fact did not daunt him from making a canal at enormous expense at Mirabeau, where, in 1744, his eldest son, Victor, was born; nor from buying an hotel in Paris in the Rue Bergère. To this reckless and migratory household a little daughter was added in 1745, and another in 1747.

In that year, Victor, the heir, died at three years old from drinking the contents of an ink-horn. He was certainly not the only Mirabeau to whom too much ink was fatal.

Then, two years later, in 1749, there appeared, with a twisted foot, a gigantic head with two teeth already cut, tongue-tied, monstrous and hideous, not merely the greatest of the Mirabeau but one of the greatest of the sons of France. The creature was so extraordinary that the Marquis had to be warned and prepared for his first introduction to him. All the other children were good-looking, as, with such handsome parents, they had a right to be. Only this one had from the beginning the sort of ugliness which insisted on attention, and was a far greater distinction than beauty.

The home into which he came was already something worse than merely improvident and disordered. The quarrels between the Marquis and the Marquise, which were to be the common talk of Europe, were already smouldering on the domestic hearth. The Marquise de Vassan, the mother-in-law of the establishment and Gabriel's godmother, a stern old woman with something more than a strain of madness in her, was already too much in the house for its peace, while the Marquis himself had begun to put into practice, towards his wife, his children, his servants, that organised system of despotism and coercion which, in the words of Gabriel-Honoré, "mutilated and lost us all."

The little sister next to Gabriel, Caroline, was indeed a good and tranquil little creature, and kept those qualities to the end of her life. The other and

elder girl, Marie-Anne, had that strong, warped mind, far too characteristic of her family.

The new baby was not only awe-strikingly ugly, but if the nursery legends are to be believed (they sound a little as if they had been invented afterwards to suit the character of the "fougueux tribun"), a fighter from the beginning. "The ugly little devil" —this was his father's name for him—pommelled his nurse, and, so soon as he could stand up and defy anybody, stood up and defied that father himself. At three years old, in 1752, he had confluent small-pox. The indolent, impulsive Marquise characteristically treated it with the wrong remedies—and behold poor Gabriel-Honoré with his hideousness intensified a hundred-fold by deep, dark scars he will carry to his grave, and which will be part of him in men's minds for ever!

In the same year he had a new sister, Louise.

When he was five, in 1754, a brother, André-Boniface-Louis, was added to the party—a very pretty, engaging little brother in his youth, and so naturally much more admired than Gabriel-Honoré —especially by his father and by his grandmother Vassan. To be sure, this dear little boy grew into the "Tonneau," or "Barrel," Mirabeau of history and caricature, and the drunken Deputy for Limoges of the French Revolution. But in the meantime he had all the charms and attentions which poor Gabriel-Honoré missed. The Marquis stigmatised his elder son's as a "gross childhood." Inquisitive, tormenting, restless—he was the sort of little boy who tires the patience of even self-controlled elders. And only one of *his* elders had self-control of any kind.

On September 23, 1756, when he was just seven, he was confirmed, and that occasion brought into his life the one Mirabeau in whom a saving common sense preponderated over cleverness, the best of quiet and excellent men, the Marquis's brother and the children's uncle, shortly to be Bailli of Mirabeau.

There is in all the eighteenth century no pleasanter picture of family affection than that which subsisted between Mirabeau's father and uncle. The Bailli (for by that name he has gone down to posterity) contrived in some marvellous way profoundly to admire and reverence the brilliant head of the family, and yet to see all his faults—to be perpetually mentioning and correcting those faults in one of the longest and most interesting series of letters of an age rich in ample and clever correspondence—and yet to remain the arrogant sinner's dearest and closest friend.

The Bailli had seen twenty years' service in the navy, and in 1753 had been made Governor of Guadeloupe. Fortunately for all the Mirabeau he was invalided home in 1755, when he was thirty-eight, and represented the Marquis, who was obliged to be absent, at Gabriel-Honoré's confirmation. History does not relate if the uncle approved or disapproved of a keen, childish retort on the subject of miracles which the confirmation candidate made to his stern old grandmother and which *she* never forgave. But that impatient, intractable little nephew certainly exercised over him, from the first, something of that strange fascination which was to rule many widely differing men.

It was the Bailli, too, who objected to that system

of coercion and oppression which the Marquis called education.

Few of the great Mirabeau's utterances have a more concentrated bitterness than those in which he speaks of his early training.

"My father is my executioner," he wrote twenty years after. "He began by trying to make a slave of me, and, failing, preferred to break me than to let me grow by his side . . . alone among fathers he crushed the natural disposition and the dawning talents of his son." "God willed that I should be born in a cellar. But He permitted I should not be smothered in it." "I have preserved few tokens of your affection: you treated me with harshness before I could possibly have deserved it . . . this method excited my passions instead of calming them. It was equally easy to touch me or to anger me."

The Marquis's system, indeed, was always to break, not to bend; and, having conceived in his mind an ideal impossible child, to flay and flog his own children until they resembled it. But children, it has been well said, obey their parents only when they see the parents themselves obeying a law; and the one way to command successfully is to command respect. There is no wonder that the Marquis's wild cubs grew up, for all the lashings and beatings he gave them, as turbulent and undisciplined as he was himself. The wonder rather is that Gabriel-Honoré, on whom the brunt of this training fell, was made by it neither liar nor slave; that, through it all he preserved a certain sweetness of disposition, ay, and an admiration, which lasted far beyond his childhood and through the worst of quarrels and recriminations,

for the great parts of the old lion who beat him. His little sisters were lucky enough to be early sent to convents by a father who disapproved, on paper, of that means of education. The chubby infant, Tonneau, was always a favourite with him. While, if the Marquise sometimes indulged her elder son, that was chiefly, if not wholly, to defy the husband with whom she was already wretched.

When Gabriel-Honoré was but four and a half years old, in 1753, a tutor, Poisson, had been added to the household of Bignon to conduct the heir's education. By the time the boy was seven or eight, Poisson was diligently at work cramming the Marquis's theories down the child's throat. Poisson's own idea of education was defined by the Bailli (who had the family genius for definition) as "choking up the fire." All the same, the engaging ugly little boy *did* sometimes succeed in softening his master's heart. But Poisson's own master was always at hand to crush the slightest weakness in the teacher. In this childish life, punishment did not need to wait on offence. Gabriel-Honoré's whole character was offence—dominant, turbulent, *agissant*—not clay for the Marquis to model to his will, but iron only to be "hammered by the shocks of doom to shape and use."

Besides Poisson, Gabriel had a master twice daily to conduct him over the Pons Asinorum, and another master to instruct him in fencing. In after-life he knew half a dozen languages, though he declared only one, Latin, had been formally taught him. The Marquis, who was quite sincerely religious, though his religion had not the faintest effect upon his con-

duct, provided the boy with a fashionable confessor —Father Imbert, Preacher to the King. As recreations, there were sometimes fêtes at Bignon, when Gabriel, who was large and strong for his age, joined in the races; or theatricals, in which Poisson's two sons, who lived in the house of Bignon and shared Gabriel's lessons, took part with Gabriel himself.

In 1756, the year of Gabriel's confirmation, his father published *The Friend of Men* (*L'Ami des Hommes*), and became one of the most famous persons of his day.

In manner as dull, formal and long-winded as his speech and letters were racy and original—in matter the *Friend of Men* is as liberal and advanced as its author was bigoted and retrograde. "The invasion of democratic ideas in the feudal mind," Tocqueville sums up the book.

There is indeed no reason to suppose because the Marquis was such a dogged tyrant as even old France seldom produced, or because, as Carlyle put it, "This Friend of Men was the enemy of almost every man he had to do with," that he was therefore anything but sincere when he waxed ruggedly eloquent over the wrongs of Humanity (with a capital) or pleaded for Rights—which, of course, it was naturally understood, would not get in the way of his own convenience. Even that style of florid and elaborate confusion, in which the rushing ideas fall over and jostle each other in their haste to get written down, did not daunt his public or obscure his cleverness, though it constantly obscured his meaning.

The great Mirabeau used to say, thereafter, that his father had the greater gifts of the two. The

boy himself was daily developing a mental capacity which compelled sometimes the grudging admiration of that father himself. One day the Marquis would write of the heir as a disgrace to his name, "sand on which nothing stays," "talkative, emphatic, making enough fuss and bother to crack heaven and earth"—and the next, that he promised infinitely well and had no trace of ill-temper, of meanness, or of lying.

Gabriel was ten when he had a fever, and was so preternaturally meek and good, his whole family felt sure he was dying. He and his mother, certainly—if not the whole Bignon household, which numbered at this time not less than thirty-eight persons—must have enjoyed something very like a holiday and peace when, in 1761, the Marquis was punished by imprisonment in Vincennes for having dashed on to paper with a foolhardy courage a picture of the evils of taxation, called *The Theory of Taxation* (*La Théorie de l'Impôt*). The imprisonment was soon changed to exile at Bignon, and that exile was quickly followed by the separation of the Marquis from his wife.

There was only one other marital *cause célèbre* in the eighteenth century more famous than his parents', and that was Mirabeau's own. The boy had grown up, as it has been seen, in an atmosphere of unhappy marriage. His mother, pettish, gossiping, illiterate —his father, browbeating and overbearing, making not the slightest allowance for her faults, and having those of his own which demanded the noblest patience and forbearance—the frightened children perpetually coerced and stormed at, the eternal bickering and

contradiction at meals, the interference and prejudice of the hostile old grandmother, the kindly uncle's visits too few, and his peaceful counsels too little heeded—this was poor Gabriel-Honoré's only idea of a home.

The separation, which took place when he was thirteen, would have been a good thing for him and his brother (the sisters only occasionally emerged from their convent at Montargis hard by) if it had not involved something worse. The Marquise retired to Limousin on a pension. And there appeared, first only at the house in Paris, but afterwards as a guest, then practically as a permanent inmate at Bignon, that malign and silent woman, the evil genius of the whole Mirabeau clan, the crafty curse, and absolute mistress of the autocrat Marquis who had no master —Madame de Pailly.

The young wife of an old husband, who lived somewhere in Switzerland and did not count, the Marquis had first met her in Paris in 1755. Poor and clever—not beautiful, but infinitely graceful and with a charming air of pensive melancholy—this was the woman without. The Loménie—the clever and excellent but not always just biographers of the Mirabeau—take exception to Gabriel-Honoré's bitter declaration that to his father's mistress he owed much of the evil and wretchedness of his life. The scape-goat was too convenient! Yet the honest Bailli, too, in many a long and earnest letter imploring his brother to shake off her fatal dominion, declared that it brought with it "discord and all the evil passions." "You are very far from having produced angels," he wrote, "but were your children angels they would

never have allowed themselves to be curbed and thwarted in their own home by a stranger. . . ."

The Marquis, who declared her to be necessary to him, "were it only for her gift of counsel," himself owned that, by that counsel, he was allowed to see his little daughter, Louise, only "one day a year until her marriage, and never to write to her at all . . . with great trouble I got peace at this price . . . she [Madame de Pailly] wants to ride all my race on the curb." She kept that curb on her Marquis for thirty years—till the day of his death. She made him as meek and patient with her as he had been domineering and passionate with the wife he had put away, while she fanned with her slow, cool hand the animosity of his passions against his children. In all his quarrels with them—and their number made them the scandal of Europe—her fatal influence can be traced. With her flowing black robes, her exquisite white skin, and the subtle fascination of her manner, she wanders in and out the destinies of the Mirabeau like a lost spirit, leaving always in her train poison, malice, and sin.

She was so much a member of the family that, before 1763, she had reasoned sixteen-year-old Caroline out of a girlish wish to take the veil. (This action may certainly be accounted to Madame for righteousness.) Caroline, always sweet and placid, married in that same year the Marquis du Saillant, and Madame de Pailly was soon writing calmly of the bride and bridegroom as "*our* young people."

In 1764, the Mirabeau who most hated and was most hated by this irregular step-mother, left home for the first time in his life and went to school.

CHAPTER II

SCHOOL AND THE ARMY

THE ungainly boy, who appeared under the pseudonym of M. Pierre-Buffière at M. de Sigrais's house in Versailles, made there, it may be said, his independent entry on to the scene of existence, and for the first time took the stage, not as one of the group of obstreperous Mirabeau children, but as a separate character.

It is not too much to say that he always remained much the passionate, uncleanly, clumsy, generous, soft-hearted genius of a schoolboy he appeared to M. de Sigrais then. M. de Sigrais was a captain of cavalry and a member of the French Academy, and had himself volunteered to the Marquis de Mirabeau to have Gabriel-Honoré in his house and to tutor him there. The Marquis began on this occasion the custom, which he ever after conscientiously followed, of preceding his son in new surroundings by the most unflattering of testimonials. In the first place he is not worthy to bear the proud name of Mirabeau, and is to be called Pierre-Buffière, after a fief belonging to that mother whom he will no doubt resemble! Beware of him, not only as a scoundrel, but as an artful scoundrel; a knave, a hypocrite, and a liar;

untractable and insubordinate; "a chaos in his head which will never be put to rights," and such "effrontery and audacity as never were since Cæsar." To be sure, it was impossible that any boy of fifteen should be quite such a demon as this. M. de Sigrais treated him kindly, and had his kindness repaid with amenableness and gentleness. He divined Gabriel's high intelligence, and delighted in his prodigious memory, and then made the fatal mistake of writing home good reports of him to his father. "In short, he is ruining him," said the Marquis, "I shall remove him": and he did.

The Abbé Choquard's school in Paris was an exceedingly polite academy for young gentlemen of the aristocracy. At this school the gilded youth danced, played tennis, and enjoyed displays of fireworks. Military manœuvres and physical exercises also formed, most sensibly, an especial part of the school curriculum, while the Abbé recommended himself to the Marquis de Mirabeau, and no doubt to other parents of the epoch, as being of proven and warranted severity, and as having a nice taste in punishment. This was evidently the man for Gabriel-Honoré! Gabriel arrived, of course, under a cloud and with the worst of characters. He was, moreover, dreadfully dirty and untidy in appearance; he was abnormally *gauche* in manner; and he was bumptious. This is on the testimony of two Scottish boys, Hugh and Gilbert Elliot. Hugh was to become a brilliant diplomatist, and Gilbert successively ambassador to Vienna, governor-general of India, and the first Earl of Minto. Both remained through life among the clearest-sighted, the most faithful, and the worthiest

friends that Mirabeau ever had. He was most intimate at school with Gilbert. Hugh, naturally enough, sometimes lost his temper at what Gilbert spoke of, twenty years later, as Gabriel-Honoré's "extreme pretensions."

The wonder is not indeed that his friends sometimes quarrelled with him. It bears high testimony to the innate sweetness and goodness of his character that, fiercely tried as it had been by ill-usage and bad example, and beset as it was now and for ever by great and glaring sins, there was that in it which compelled the affection and attachment not only of good men, but—which is an even higher compliment—of good and honest boys.

Choquard was soon boasting he had "tamed and broken" Gabriel-Honoré. But the Marquis, not being of that opinion, threatened to remove his son to a house of correction; and Gabriel's school-fellows signed a round-robin begging he might stay. He did. He learned with that erratic aptitude (always so vexing to conscientious, plodding mediocrity) everything he set his mind to—including English, in which his friendship with the Elliots doubtless helped him. He was passionately attached to mathematics, and to music, which he could read at sight. As for happiness—he was surely happier than he had ever been. He was away from his home. Popular with the boys, even the Abbé was not always proof against the fascination of which the Marquis had warned him. The future orator of the National Assembly was soon reciting, as a kind of show boy and pet pupil, a discourse of the Abbé's in praise of mathematics; and in 1767 an *éloge* (of his own composi-

tion) on the Prince of Condé, which received the proud distinction of mention in the newspapers.

But Gabriel-Honoré was now seventeen, and must choose a career—or have one chosen for him, which is quite a different thing. On July 19, 1767, he was incorporated in the regiment of Berri Cavalry, whose colonel was the Marquis de Lambert, himself quite a young man, but a narrow-minded martinet, and an earnest disciple of the Friend of Men. Grévin, an old family servant of the Mirabeau, and, it was whispered, the creature of Madame de Pailly, accompanied the heir to the army—to spy on his actions. The good Bailli disapproved of this person and of his mission—and said so.

It was only natural that, irritated by this mean surveillance, and with a master over him at once very near his own age and a harsh disciplinarian, a lusty boy such as Gabriel should be perpetually in disgrace. He passed a large part of the first year in the military prison. In the second, in July, 1768, when the regiment was stationed at Saintes, near Rochelle, he incurred a card debt for fifty louis, which would have mattered little, because he was so popular with the people of Saintes " they would have lent him money to any extent "; and then became his colonel's successful rival in a discreditable love affair. Lambert, in revenge, sent round the regiment a shameful caricature of young Mirabeau. Young Mirabeau, in a rage, ran away to Paris, and threw himself on the mercy of his father's friend, the Duc de Nivernois.

The Duke, once ambassador-extraordinary to England, was a fine gentleman, with nerves, and manners

so beautiful that Lord Chesterfield held them up as an example to his son. Nivernois and a Madame de Rochefort (whom Horace Walpole called Nivernois's "decent friend") were regular correspondents of the Marquis de Mirabeau and of Madame de Pailly. Thus they were not bad people for Gabriel-Honoré to appeal to. But they could not prevent the Marquis from sending his son-in-law, du Saillant, straight off to Paris with the strictest orders to take the young scapegrace back to Saintes, to be court-martialled there, as was just and correct.

The boy of eighteen, alone against a hostile world, which included his colonel, lieutenant-colonel, the spy Grévin, and du Saillant representing the angry Marquis, defended himself at that court-martial with plenty of pluck and energy. But it condemned him all the same to imprisonment in the Île de Rhé. In the meantime, the Marquis had threatened to make Tonneau his heir, and had even entertained the inhuman idea of transporting Gabriel to the Dutch colonies.

Eleven years after, in Vincennes, when he had generously forgiven many actual and practical injuries, the thought that that transportation had even been mooted was still gall and wormwood to Gabriel's soul. All the same, the Marquis's bark was really worse than his bite, and in an episode which, as he said, and Gabriel owned, "included a promise of marriage and all the follies at once," he took credit to himself for leniency and moderation.

As for the usual certificate which preceded Gabriel to his new master, M. d'Aulan, the governor of the Île de Rhé, "I have only told him," wrote the Mar-

quis, " that the boy is hot-headed, wrong-minded, and instinctively a liar."

The Île de Rhé is a long, narrow strip of an island, lying about ten miles to the west of La Rochelle, producing nothing but salt marshes, and beaten fiercely by the Atlantic. Yet, in Mirabeau's experience of prisons—and no man ever had a larger—Rhé loomed not at all unfavourably. D'Aulan soon came to love his prisoner, then allowed him all possible freedom and relaxation, and at the end of six months pleaded that he might be set at liberty.

But the firebrand had not been two hours a free man when he engaged in a duel; and Grévin reported him to his father as " swearing, fighting, wounding, and breathing forth an unthinkable scoundrelism." The unthinkable scoundrel forgave Grévin his mean espionage in the sequel.

The relations of such a wild dare-devil may certainly be forgiven for having breathed audible sighs of relief when he embarked, on April 16, 1769, as sub-lieutenant of foot in the legion of Lorraine, which formed part of the overwhelming force sent by France to quell the insurrection of patriots in rebellious Corsica, France's most recent acquisition.

Long after, in the National Assembly, Mirabeau denounced this war as unjust and iniquitous, and declared that his participation in it had " sullied " his youth. But at the moment he was only agog for a fight—with the love of it in his blood and his bones. There was truth in his own assertion that he was born to be a soldier. As sound as he was rapid in judgment, the Mirabeau of war would have known, as the Mirabeau of politics always knew, what the

man on the other side of the hill was going to do next. Add to that quality an absolute indifference to physical danger, a "nature boiling with ambition, ravenous for fame, strong, audacious, fiery" (the description is his own), and the fact that this soldier of twenty was already devouring military works in all languages, and it may not unfairly be said that if a Mirabeau had been lost to the world, a Napoleon would have been gained. In the ranks of the enemy Gabriel-Honoré may very likely have met face to face Napoleon's father—the *insouciant* Charles Buonaparte, who was fighting under Paoli.

The campaign lasted from April, 1769, until May, 1770. The sub-lieutenant of foot came out of it so far with *éclat* that even the alien, obstinate Marquis wrote of him, half tenderly, as "my Corsican filibuster." The history of his actual doings on the campaign has been destroyed, and with it the history of the amours which are said to have stained this part of his career, as, alas! they stained all parts of it. One need only think of Corsican Mirabeau as of a big, brave boy, with a heavy frame and a huge stride, his "terrible mane" flung back over his shoulder, coarse features, thick jaw, and eyes flashing cleverness and kindness. Every one loved him here—as they loved him everywhere for ever. The "rigid Vioménil," who led the expedition, gave him his "affection and esteem." Villereau, his colonel, was also his friend. Guibert—the effective Guibert of the *Essay on Tactics* and a fashionable play—found time to remark him particularly. His major swore he never saw a man with greater ability for the career of arms. His messmates, according to the

Bailli, reported him as "confoundedly active, as brave as a lion, and with the wit of three hundred thousand devils."

The expedition returned to Toulon on May 8, 1770. The sub-lieutenant had in his pocket the manuscript of the beginning of a *History of Corsica,* which the author's most hostile critic, his father, declared a thing of character and audacity, and which the candid Bailli was at some pains to assure his brother, "*you* could not have written"; while he added that "it came from a head full of fire and genius, and from a heart firm, strong, and good."

The possession of that heart "firm, strong, and good" is the key, and the only key, to the mysteries of the character of Mirabeau, boy and man, prisoner or tribune. Admit it, and through the blackness of bitter sins and vice it explains why, from the beginning to the end, Gabriel-Honoré always leaves the student of his life with the impression as of something, somewhere, sound, sweet, and true.

One is not wrong at least in attributing the wildness and the faults of a Gabriel-Honoré of one-and-twenty (and there were already a fine little sum of them) to vile education and influence, and his rare frankness and generosity to natural virtue.

His unhappy circumstances at home had gone from bad to worse while he had been changing prisons or fighting Corsicans. Marie-Anne, his eldest sister, had taken the veil in the convent of Saint-Dominique in Montargis—where she eventually died, mad. In 1766, the Marquis had obtained his first *lettre de cachet* (the first of many), and, by it, had imprisoned his wife in a convent at Limoges. His house was

now managed mostly by Caroline du Saillant—" our good and peaceful Caroline "—who seems actually, for a while, to have agreed even with her mother's supplanter, Madame de Pailly. That " chatte noire," as her friends called her, crept in and out of the household, as it were, on her velvet paws: purring and soft-spoken, and with the poison of asps under her lips. The Bailli's descents on Bignon were only too few. But he was there when, on November 18, 1769, Louise, Gabriel's younger sister, was married, at seventeen, to the Marquis de Cabris.

Of all his brothers and sisters, Louise had, save Caroline, the most to do with Gabriel's life. At this time an exquisitely pretty girl, with " the brilliancy of the most brilliant youth, the most eloquent black eyes, the freshness of Hebe . . . and that grace and magic of seduction which belongs only to your sex " (the description was written by Gabriel to Sophie de Monnier ten years later), this girlish Louise had also, for her loss, the Mirabeau madness and badness, and all the Mirabeau brains. The marriage was the usual *mariage de convenance,* and as Cabris's fortune was satisfactory, the facts that his family was deeply tainted with insanity and that he was a weak and vicious boy were scarcely even considered. When the legion of Lorraine landed at Toulon in May, 1770, bride and bridegroom were at their own home at Grasse. The Marquis de Mirabeau and the du Saillants remained at Bignon. Gabriel-Honoré went straight to his uncle, who was living in the family castle of the Mirabeau, at Mirabeau, thirty miles from Aix-en-Provence.

CHAPTER III

THE CHÂTEAU OF MIRABEAU

VERY few out of the thousands of Englishmen who yearly visit the French Riviera ever think of turning aside at Marseilles and taking the train which would land them, in an hour's crawling journey, at Aix-en-Provence.

If they did, they would find there a perfectly self-contained old city, with Roman baths, broad, tree-lined thoroughfares with fountains of hot mineral springs in the midst of them, ancient churches, and a famous library, inferior only to the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris. A little closer observation, and they would discover, in dark streets, many a fine old family mansion, rich in heirlooms and vertu. Aix was the first Roman colony in Gaul, and for a long time the capital of Provence. But her pride lies less in these things than in the stately calm with which she has stood aside and watched, unmoved, the loud vulgarity of the Empires, the rush of the Commune, and the *bourgeois* jog-trot of the Republic. Since the Great Revolution filled her soul with passion and her streets with blood, everything has been too slight to touch her. Her old feudal aristocracy still live in her midst, or in their country *châteaux,* forty or fifty

miles into the Provençal country. She has resumed, as no other town in France has resumed, her ancient dignity and peace. A tablet, above what is now a grocer's shop in one of her streets, records that here was born that Luc de Clapiers, Marquis de Vauvenargues, who was the school-friend of Mirabeau's father, and in the Cours Mirabeau the present representatives of the Vauvenargues family live to-day. A few doors from them, at what is now No. 16 Cours Mirabeau, and the residence of the Comte de Mougins-Roquefort, the Marquis de Mirabeau had his town-house; and about thirty miles into the country, the *château* called after his name.

It stood, and stands, in the "gorge of two windy valleys," a great rectangular building, with battlemented towers, built on a rock as steep as a staircase, and dominating the village of Mirabeau, which creeps up that rock to its feet. Behind the hill runs the river Durance. The country, though it has some of the features of that land of promise—that land of olive-yards and vineyards, of light, smiles, and sunshine, which lies between the Maritime Alps and the Mediterranean—is far wilder and rougher; beaten with fiercer winds, burnt by a more scorching sun; here, hills darkly covered with pine; there, rocks grey and barren: fit cradle for a race with all the warmth and the dreams of the south in its heart, but in mind and head the fighting resolution and energies born of harshness and adversity. Of all the eighteenth-century Mirabeau, the Bailli was most influenced, perhaps, by this cradle of his race, and lived most in it. The Marquis usually preferred his estate of Pertuis, some ten miles away. But if the Bailli was

most affected, his great nephew was too, in a very marked degree, the son of this soil.

Uncommonly enterprising and quick-witted, really anxious to please his father and leave boyish escapades behind him—this is what the Bailli found Gabriel-Honoré, and reported him to the Marquis on the present occasion. The father replied by a douche of cold water, in Mirabese, upon the uncle's enthusiasm. My dear brother, the fumes of the intoxicating personality of my young hopeful have certainly got into your head! Anxious to stand well with me, is he? Then let him study my pet science, political economy, as interpreted by myself and Quesnay!

So the summer days of 1770 saw Gabriel-Honoré mastering at once his impetuous hatred of that unsatisfactory subject, and the subject itself, and living, at least not ill-temperedly, though he was only one-and-twenty and mad for action, a quiet and laborious life. All the time he was indeed trying hard, and, as it seems, very sensibly, to get his father to let him resume his career as a soldier—which the Marquis now declared to be a profession as "out of date as tournaments." For a few weeks Louise, the pretty, newly-made Marquise de Cabris, enlivened the old castle and her brother's labours with her presence; and Gabriel made her the confidante (Louise was *intrigante* born) of his love affairs in Corsica. But, on the whole, he was really, honestly trying to be a good boy. If he did use in eight days the Bailli's supply of ink and paper calculated to last eight months, he saved the Bailli's legs by tramping all over the estate for him, learning its business with an impetuous aptitude and a thoroughness rarely

found in combination. He suggested alterations and improvements. He made plans of the country. The Abbé Castagny, the Marquis's chaplain and man of business, bore testimony to his good sense and his hard work. In short, my dear brother, when you remember the boy's age and "the saltpetre peculiar to our blood," you must allow that he does merit a little praise and indulgence! If the time is ever to come, it has surely come now, for you to forgive him what were after all follies, not crimes! This was the tenor of all the Bailli's letters of this summer.

On September 21, therefore, Gabriel, after a journey on which he had been thrown from his horse, upset out of a carriage, and bled by a doctor, arrived at the Château of Aigueperse in Limousin, a fief belonging to his mother, and was there reunited to the Marquis, his father.

There are, alas! few episodes in the relationship of these two Mirabeau which are not discoloured by anger or pain. But this time at Aigueperse was one of them. For a little, the two understood each other. The son curbed himself, and listened, with a patience wholly foreign to his nature, to his father's lectures and harangues. He bore with dissertations on that tedious political economy. He was the Marquis's secretary—a post which certainly involved much practice in keeping the temper. Gentle Caroline—Saillanette—interceded for him, and he was allowed to resume his own title, Comte de Mirabeau, and to drop the ignominious pseudonym, Pierre-Buffière. There was no more talk of Tonneau being made the heir. Madame de Pailly was away. Half—more than half—the secret of the reconcilia-

tion and the happiness lay in her absence. On November 4, 1770, the Marquise de Vassan, Mirabeau's maternal grandmother, died, and the death necessitated some communication between his separated father and mother. He was the go-between. One of the cruellest and most painful consequences of the separation of their parents was that all the Mirabeau children of necessity took sides, and were either father's men or mother's men. Gabriel was a father's man on this occasion, naturally, and felt it necessary to abuse his mother with a fearful candour, which, taking into consideration his education and his father's example, is deplorable rather than surprising.

In the same month there was a famine in Limousin, and he came to the fore in a better way, worked with the starving peasantry, "animated and sustained them," and even established at Aigueperse a sort of village council for their benefit.

In February, 1771, the Marquis introduced the son, of whom at the moment he was in his crusty fashion positively proud, to the Court and the fine world of Paris.

The Court consisted at the moment of a king, Louis XV., who was in the last and lowest stage of senile degradation, a good, *gauche* Dauphin of seventeen, and his wife, Marie-Antoinette, in the first dazzling freshness of her girlish charm, and with the madcap spirits of a child just set free from restraint. There was further a Duc de Chartres—the Egalité Orléans of the future—now about four-and-twenty; and an innocent little Madame Élisabeth of seven. It would be interesting to know exactly the effect

created by Mirabeau upon these persons, whose destinies he was in all cases (save in the case of the King) himself to affect so greatly. Little Madame Élisabeth, it is recorded, when the Marquis brought his son to be presented, set the courtiers in a roar by looking up into the young man's scarred face, and naïvely inquiring why he had not been inoculated?

The Court at large also saw at first only a very plain, untidy, provincial young man; and, in a few days, some one quite unusually witty, charming, and good-humoured, only certainly rather bumptious and rather masterful. The Marquis introduced him to the Guémenées, the Noailles, and that Madame de Rochefort who had not forgotten the hero of the Saintes escapade. He met again Viomenil, his old friend of Corsica, Lambert, his old enemy, and Sigrais, his tutor. He made the acuqaintance of the Marshal de Broglie, the Prince de Condé, and the Duc de Chartres himself. Everybody's opinion was favourable. If some raised their brows at him for a scamp—well, even wildness has its charm so long as it is the quality of some one else's boy and not of one's own. Gabriel was soon three days a week at Versailles, and overwhelmed with engagements for dining, hunting, riding, and supping. The only complaint even his father could bring against him was that he let his friends see he was cleverer than themselves—" which is not clever on his part."

But somehow, before very long, the charming social success began to bore father and son both. Not made for *petits maîtres,* these men! The Court and the town-house—it was the du Saillants' house at which they were staying—soon irked and cramped

them, and, being irked and cramped, they began, Mirabeau-like, to quarrel. The Marquis thought it high time Gabriel had something to do. To be sure, he had been made captain of dragoons soon after arriving in Paris. But that post involved nothing but elegant idleness. The Bailli had suggested diplomacy as a career for his nephew, and the Marquis spent some time searching vainly for some influential person in whose train Gabriel could travel abroad. Failing this, he was despatched to Bignon for a month or two, where he superintended a village fête and fireworks, and the villagers found him an excellent "bon diable." About June or July he was posted back to Paris again, where he studied, with wonderful effect, if one looks into his prodigious *connaissances* and career, at the great libraries; and where he made the acquaintance of Voltaire's unhappy butt, the Marquis de Pompignan, famed as having "commented lamentably upon Lamentations."

Then, all of a sudden, there came another peremptory summons, invented, it is said, by the malice of Madame de Pailly, for Gabriel to go and see to the affairs of the property in Limousin. The mistress had regained her influence and resumed that place in the Marquis's life from which, for a very little while, Gabriel had ousted her. How she loved the boy can be imagined. Soon orders came for him to return to Bignon—where, as he said long after, "I saw I was always wrong because I was not loved"—and the end of the year 1771 found him ordered away from Bignon to Mirabeau.

Conceive, if it be possible, the effect of such a buffeting from pillar to post, emanating from a hated

interloper, upon a man with such blood as Gabriel had in his veins. Remember that he panted for action, and was condemned, month after month, to a little parade duty, only less hateful than complete idleness. Anger and impatience were uncontrollable, or at least uncontrolled, elements of his nature. On the whole, it may be admitted that at this time of his life he behaved extraordinarily well.

There was a peasants' riot to be quelled at Mirabeau, and he quelled it: by haranguing the insurgents, says one authority; by beating them, says another. Why not by both measures? In a later Mirabeau, words were always the prelude to deeds, and at two-and-twenty he was certainly as ready with the eloquence of the fist as of the tongue.

But he had other things besides peasants to think of in that winter of 1771–72. He spent five months of it in Aix. Aix was exceedingly sociable as well as exclusive, and her aristocratic families were accustomed to spend the winters very agreeably in their town-houses, associating affably with each other, and haughtily pitying the outsider on whom they turned their patrician backs. The Mirabeau—descended from the Arrighetti, if you please—are, of course, of Us. Gabriel, despite his roughness and his ugliness, had charmed Paris. It was more difficult to win Aix. But he did that too. In March, 1772, he was engaged to a daughter of one of her richest and proudest houses, Mademoiselle Marie-Marguerite-Émilie de Covet, the sole child and heiress of the Marquis de Marignane.

CHAPTER IV

MARRIAGE

THE Marquis de Mirabeau had always a rage for posterity—*postéromanie* his brother called it—and with this end in view had for some time been anxious that his heir should marry some one—or any one. To gratify this desire, the obliging Bailli had found in the May of 1770 a suitable *partie*—Mademoiselle de Castellane. The negotiations for this marriage fell through. By September of 1770 he had selected Mademoiselle de Marignane herself. But Gabriel-Honoré was at the moment at Aigueperse being reconciled to his father, and missed his chance. His sister Louise, who may be described as having a finger in every matrimonial pie, wrote to him, "I warn you, Mademoiselle de Marignane is promised to President d'Albertas's son. You are too late. No matter. She is hideous and very short."

Gabriel, wisely resigning himself to his loss, fell in and out of love with some one in Paris. But when he returned to Aix, in the January of 1772, he found Mademoiselle de Marignane still unmarried, though very much engaged, and, chiefly excited by the prospect of ousting the other suitors, presented himself to her father as an applicant for her hand. The Marquis de Marignane was a lazy,

pleasant person, with several magnificent estates and the lordship of Hyères, and of the Îles d'Hyères. He was separated from his wife, who herself was the child of separated parents. Between the indolent, agreeable father who neglected her, a mother who had ill-treated her, and then a miserly old grandmother who scolded her, Émilie came of a stock as morally rotten as did her lover himself. A little, sallow, lively, smiling person, slightly crooked in figure, with an insinuating manner, and a pronounced taste for flirtation, this was Émilie de Marignane at eighteen. As for her ugliness, she was, despite Madame de Cabris, quite pretty enough for an heiress, with whom, as with royal personages, a little beauty goes a long way. She had very charming dark eyes. She sang and played delightfully. "That melodious monkey," her father-in-law used to call her thereafter. Her talent for recounting Provençal anecdotes in *patois* delighted him; and the fact that the anecdotes were somewhat indecorous was not displeasing to him, nor to the age, and therefore not likely to be to the *raconteuse* herself.

Mademoiselle was further frivolous, but not foolish. In fact, she was in most respects a very ordinary woman, whose tragedy it was to marry a most extraordinary man.

The son of the President d'Albertas, who had made what Mirabeau called in his memoirs written from Vincennes the most "seductive proposals," had been dismissed. A M. de Valette, whose marriage with Émilie was arranged and the articles prepared when Mirabeau came to Aix, was sent away, rejected, in a week, "and I was accepted." "I was preferred

before five rivals." These statements are Gabriel's own, and must be allowed to be coloured by vanity and the writer's personal interests at the moment. But they were in the main true. He may be said to have dashed at this love affair with the impetuosity which takes no denial. Perhaps Mademoiselle's prospective wealth weighed something with him. His father had always kept him very short of money and expected him to live handsomely upon nothing a year. (He was trying this expedient at the very moment of his courtship, and experiencing all its difficulties.) Then the Marquis and the Bailli not only approved the marriage, but peremptorily urged it. Émilie *was* attractive, and the love of music formed a taste in common. Her lover was at least so far in love with her that he was determined no one else should be. From her point of view, he was young, brave, arduous, overwhelming—the world his oyster, waiting his sword to open it. She forgave the defects of his person for the delights of his personality. Her father for the moment only presented the young couple with the very beggarly annuity of 125*l.* a year. The Marquis de Mirabeau allowed them 250*l.*, and gave the bride the Mirabeau family diamonds. All Aix went *en fête.* All aristocratic Aix was bidden to gorgeous wedding festivities which lasted a week. The unhappy bridegroom, in accordance with a prevailing custom, had to give every single guest a handsome gift. Fashion—and his own inclinations—demanded he should himself present a splendid appearance. At the time of his death his wedding-suit was still unpaid for.

On June 23, 1772, at Aix, in the dark church of

the Holy Spirit, which appears to have looked then exactly as it looks to-day, Gabriel-Honoré de Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau, was married to Émilie de Marignane. Of his own family, though they had so strongly urged the marriage, the only member present was Madame de Cabris. The young couple started gaily off on a wedding-trip, in which they stayed at the bride's family estate of Marignane and at Touves, then at Marseilles and Toulon, and finally at Hyères, where the Marquis de Mirabeau had an *appartement*. Early in August they returned to Aix, where Gabriel found an accumulation of debts and creditors awaiting him—bills owing for his five months' residence in the place and for the wedding expenses, mounting in all to about 3000*l.* To be sure, the debtor found it easy to knock down the creditors when they accosted him in the streets with their little bills. But that only settled things for the moment. M. de Marignane, who was perfectly good-natured, offered his son-in-law 2500*l.*; but the Marquis de Mirabeau, who was not, refused to let Gabriel accept this loan.

On the whole it seemed cheapest and simplest to retire to the Château of Mirabeau, and autumn saw the young couple established there, not ill-content. The young Countess, indeed, fell in love with the frowning feudal castle, and made the gayest promises to her father-in-law of a modest and frugal life. "We are running after order and I hope we shall catch it up," she wrote. They certainly never did.

Her husband was soon employing his redundant leisure and energies in planting trees, and in building

on to and in altering the house. He redecorated his wife's rooms at a cost of 20,000 livres. He gave her diamonds and fine clothes. In his own splendid and untidy wardrobe, suits of " celestial blue " and " pale rose " figured expensively. He was soon drawn into the costly lawsuits and quarrels with which the chaplain, steward, and farmers on the estate had been filling their leisure. The only inexpensive occupation he had was putting on paper " without order and sequence " and in hot-hurry, as he afterwards declared, certain ideas then throbbing in his busy brain.

He was now pre-eminently the sort of man who seldom thought of money until he had none; and all through his life the man who valued it solely because its possession alone makes it possible to forget all about it. A year went by at Mirabeau. His wife's " pretty, continual smile " had not yet begun to bore him; and if she was spoilt and shallow, she was also lively and good-natured. There were hopes too that the Marquis's *postéromanie* would be gratified.

By October, 1773, the Mirabeau *ménage* had returned to Aix, and there, on October 8th, Mirabeau's first and only son, Victor, was born. In later years, he told Madame de Monnier that at this time he made a profound study of the subject of the physical and mental education of children. The letters he wrote to her *à propos* of another child certainly prove him to have been a father not only singularly tender, but singularly wise, thoughtful, and enlightened. The tenderness seems to have been rather maternal than paternal—no simple details too small for it, no homely considerations dismissed as contemptible. But in virile wisdom the opinions of the great Mira-

beau on education are not only beyond his age, but beyond our own age; and there are few modern parents who have nothing to learn from them.

His first delight in his son and heir—of whom his wife was never more than tepidly fond—was interrupted by a sudden crisis in his financial affairs.

He could no longer settle his creditors with his fists. One debt had begotten others. He had long since had recourse to the Jews, and had obtained money at a fearful usury. His father-in-law, roused from lazy affability to indignation, wrote to the Marquis and declared that Émilie's husband was not only within an ace of arrest, but that he had pawned his wife's diamonds and beautiful silver toilette set.

The case Gabriel made out for himself, however, was, it must be admitted, not wholly a bad one. The Marquis had expected and desired his son to live handsomely and up to his position—and had given him impossibly little money to do it on. For those wedding gifts and bachelor expenses at Aix he had had to raise money—somehow. He had married, at his father's wish, a girl accustomed to every luxury, and a girl who had brought him, anyhow for the moment, scarcely the means to pay for her dresses. As for pawning diamonds, he had been rash enough to buy them for her! He admitted frankly that to plant a long avenue and rebuild and decorate at Mirabeau had been foolish exceedingly. But after all I was young and heedless! "I saw with the eyes of twenty," which never look beyond the moment. In short, the best thing you could do for me is to obtain a *lettre de cachet,* which will put me *sous la main du roi* (a position in which I cannot be arrested as

debtor), and have me banished to some spot not too remote and inconvenient. This expedient was one which never failed to recommend itself to the Marquis. He demanded the letter of banishment from the Duc de la Vrillière and described Gabriel's conduct in terms much less violent and unjust than usual. He and the Bailli would settle the boy's debts.

On December 16, 1773, an order from the King forbidding Gabriel-Honoré to live at Mirabeau and confining him to the village of Manosque, only a few miles away from it, was despatched from Paris.

The little party of exiles—father, mother, and child—took up their abode there with the Gassauds, old friends of the Marquis de Mirabeau and of the Marignanes, a family of provincial *noblesse,* consisting of father, mother, and a good-looking, agreeable young musketeer, their son, at the moment at home on leave. By this time Madame de Mirabeau had become more than a little weary of duns and discomforts, and was more than a little annoyed at having to live at this stupid Manosque, instead of at Aix in the midst of gaieties and friends. She had certainly loved her husband after her capacity—but then that capacity was so narrow! Guibal, the author of *Mirabeau et la Provence,* and her champion, so far as any one can fairly champion her, says that she had less " vicious instincts " than " moral mediocrity." Very likely; but Manosque was dull, the baby too young to be any companion, its father always busy writing, and she was twenty, and loved change and excitement—to folly. She soon came to compare favourably the pleasant, sympathetic young mus-

keteer (for whom she is said to have had a youthful *tendresse* before her marriage) with that great, hulking, impetuous husband of hers, with his queer fits of temper and tenderness, and his disorderliness, which might have driven any woman mad.

The preference quickly deepened into a more dangerous feeling. She had been born and educated in the very atmosphere of conjugal infidelity. Mirabeau himself had, she suspected, an *affaire du cœur* with a certain Madame de Limaye. Of his wife he had no suspicions. His whole nature was unsuspicious. But when, at last, a letter fell into his hands from Émilie to her lover, containing proof of her dishonour, he fell into one of those tempests of rage and jealousy fearful to witness. This—from the mother of his son! This—"the worst and bloodiest of outrages" from a man I "overwhelmed with friendship!" He flung his passionate story on to paper. But the woman-friend to whom he sent it, a good, great lady, the Comtesse de Vence, a neighbour of his family, replied with wise counsels of mercy and of forgiveness. The old father Gassaud asked on his knees the life of his boy. The mother caught Mirabeau's hand and bathed it in tears. He was not proof—he was never proof all his life—against such sorrow. "I was ready to die with shame to see their grey hairs at my feet." He made his wife break off with her lover—by a letter, which played a very important part in a famous lawsuit nine years later. He himself wrote a letter to Gassaud—youthful, bombastic, absurd. Émilie wrote to her father that her husband had been "very good to her." But all this was not enough for him. He not only could not do things

by halves—but he could not do at all without overdoing.

The affair had nearly broken off a most advantageous matrimonial engagement young Gassaud had formed. And what must this hot-hearted Mirabeau do but, breaking the parole which confined him to Manosque, get on his horse, ride post-haste to Tourettes, near Grasse, where the young woman's relatives lived, "press, pray, conjure" that the engagement might be renewed? Then he went on to Vence hard by, to see Madame de Vence, his good and gentle counsellor. She reproached him for breaking his parole. But that did not prevent him from returning to Grasse, to visit his sister, Madame de Cabris.

Louise was now two-and-twenty, extremely charming and extremely bad. Her father, with his "nice derangement of epitaphs," did not hesitate to call her the "enemy of her race," "the stuff of which the damned are made," and declared her endowed with the "natal irreligion" of all his children. It is true that in "a family totally exempt from blockheads, but a little liable to produce blackguards," Louise was one of the cleverest and one of the worst.

Add to this character, a fate which had united her to a morally and mentally deficient husband whom she had never seen until the day before her wedding, and it is not wonderful that when her brother arrived to visit her five years after it, he found her the scandal and the by-word of her neighbourhood, with a *cavaliere servente,* and with some long story of an insult from a certain baron which Gabriel must please avenge!

Unluckily, Gabriel was always as ready to avenge

injuries as to forgive them. He arrived at the Cabrises' house in Grasse on August 4, 1774. On August 5th, he, the *cavaliere servente,* Briançon (who was a soldier and a scoundrel), and a woman-friend of Louise's, went to the Cabrises' recently built little country house, Le Pavillon des Indes, situated among the olive groves, and facing on what is now the station of the railway from Grasse to Cannes.

Here they dined pleasantly, in the open air. But the property adjoined that of the offending Baron de Villeneuve-Mouans himself; and presently the Baron, who was fat and fifty, appeared on one of his terraces with an umbrella to shield himself from the August sun. Mirabeau started up at once, seized the opportunity and the Baron's umbrella, and soundly belaboured him with it. The fighting pair fell over the terrace of olives, one on top of the other—the enormous and pugnacious Mirabeau hitting his enemy hard all the time. The Baron's peasants, at work among the olives, looked on aghast; Louise de Cabris leant against a wall, in convulsions of laughter. She had sense enough, however, when the fight was over, to persuade her brother to return immediately to Manosque. But the Baron of course appealed to the police. By August 22, 1774, he had succeeded in getting an order for Mirabeau's arrest. A week later, Émilie (meek, with the burden of that recent forgiveness on her) arrived at her father-in-law's house at Bignon, carefully instructed in Gabriel's version of the story and with express directions to win the Marquis's help and favour. But the Friend of Men only knew one way of helping anybody. Another *lettre de cachet!* He quite thought that

his son ought to be grateful to him for thus preventing his arrest—by imprisonment. Why, by this means you will be securely enjoying his Majesty's hospitality where barons and creditors can do you no harm!

Émilie, to be sure, wept a little when she heard the ultimatum, and feebly suggested she should share her husband's imprisonment. "That," said his irascible old parent, "would not be decent." She acquiesced in this verdict, very serenely; arranged to stay at Bignon instead, and wrote and told her husband his fate with, said he, "the calmest air in the world." The accommodating government despatched a new *lettre de cachet* at the Marquis's request.

On September 20, 1774, Mirabeau arrived at the Château d'If.

CHAPTER V

THE CHÂTEAU D'IF, AND THE "ESSAY ON DESPOTISM"

THE Château d'If is, as every one knows, an island fortress just outside Marseilles. Its ancient castle, formerly the prison, is associated in most people's minds with a hero of romance so familiar that he has become as real as flesh and blood—the flamboyant creation of Dumas—Edmond Dantès, Count of Monte Cristo.

The elder Mirabeau had been to the Château d'If in his youth, as a visitor, and had described the visit in a burlesque medley of prose and verse.

His son had not come for amusement, however.

What must have been the feelings of this vigorous and stalwart man, hotly conscious of great mental power, and burning with proud ambitions, who found himself at five-and-twenty, and for the second time in his life, a State prisoner for no worse crimes than debt he could hardly have helped incurring, and a fight which was at its worst a not ungenerous folly? His whole world was hostile or helpless to him. Without, the choleric and unreasonable father who had put him there; a young wife, false and indifferent; an indignant father-in-law; an uncle, who was powerless to aid him; a sister, whose friendship

had been more dangerous than enmity; a mother, alienated and far-off; a quasi-stepmother, his subtle and tireless slanderer; his child, only at Manosque with the Gassauds, but as effectually separated from him as if thousands of miles lay between them; and himself, without money, without a profession, without prospects, and under the close surveillance of a governor, who had not only been assured (as usual) that his prisoner was a knave, a liar, and the most determined *mauvais sujet* on earth, but who had been particularly requested to make the prison *régime* as hard and unpleasant for him as possible, and on no account to allow him to communicate with anybody but his wife. If—says Lucas de Montigny, the "Fils Adoptif" of Mirabeau, to whose *Memoirs* all Mirabeau's biographers are primarily and largely indebted—if this Gabriel-Honoré had not been one of the best of men, such treatment would certainly have made him one of the worst. What other man but would have sunk, in that gloomy dungeon, into sullen hatred and despair? Few, at least, but a Mirabeau would have risen buoyant above such circumstances as these, carved out a destiny through prison walls with no tools but his bare hands and his fertile heart and brain, and proved triumphantly that, in the teeth of the worst and darkest obstacles, man is man and master of his fate.

He began, as he always began, by winning the governor. First, M. d'Alègre came to take a different view from that of the old Marquis of the prisoner's heart; and then of the prisoner's head. The freedom of the citadel—a strictly limited freedom, but still better than a dungeon cell—was allowed to him.

Afterward, pens, ink, and paper. With these, and with a brain teeming with ideas, and a soul with passion, who can be all unhappy? M. d'Alègre commissioned his visitor to write a paper, or Memoir (a very long one, as the visitor's leisure was ample), on the Salt Mines of Franche-Comté (*Mémoire sur les Salines de la Franche-Comté*), and Gabriel produced a vigorous declamation against the abuse of *gabelle*—the tax on salt, that fuse to the fire of the Revolution—and against all such taxation as crushed the many to profit the few.

Then he looked over a *Life* the Marquis had written of Jean-Antoine, second Marquis of Mirabeau, Gabriel's reckless and valiant grandfather. The tempestuous chaos of the father's ideas made the son smile a little, perhaps, but not unkindly. He brought some sort of order into that clever confusion —curtailed, rectified, smoothed; and, having after all many a trait in common with his haughty, bombastical parent, obliterated lowly ancestors and magnified noble ones with a large picturesqueness and freedom.

He certainly needed occupation. Such news as reached him—and a good deal began to filter into the *château* somehow—was not inspiriting. M. d'Alègre sent flattering reports of Gabriel's good behaviour. And on October 11, 1774, his father wrote to M. de Marignane: "If, by some miracle, he behaves so well that the Governor will answer for his good behaviour, . . . *I shall put him in some other citadel* where he can be proved." Meantime the Marquis was not hurrying himself to settle his son's debts.

Then his wife's letters, which at first had contained feeble ideas for getting him set free, grew rare and

colder. Émilie, in fact, was enjoying herself not a little at Bignon—telling her *patois* stories and singing her Provençal ballads—and feeling her husband's absence—he really has brought me nothing but emotions and uncomfortableness!—a decided relief. She said sometimes she was longing to return to Manosque, where she could be with little Victor, and come to see her husband; but she never returned. When he angrily commanded her either to join him or to go and live at Aix with her father, she replied that she awaited her husband's orders and would follow him anywhere, adduced some very weak excuses for disobeying them, and went up to Paris with the Bignon household, taking the keenest interest in the shops, the theatres, and the parties. The fact that young Laurent de Gassaud was also in Paris with his regiment did not diminish her enjoyment, and added to her husband's wrath; and presently, with her inert mind under the influence of that dominant old Marquis, she gained his favour by showing him all her husband's letters.

But, after all, some one was true to the prisoner, and remembered him kindly and to some purpose. In November, Tonneau, who had been put into the army in 1772, and was now an uncommonly wild young soldier of twenty, heard of his brother's captivity when he was ill in bed at Malta; rose up straightway, came to Marseilles; bribed a boatman with his "mouth of gold"—the only gold the Mirabeau ever had to bribe with—to take him over to the island, and a "canteen-keeper's pretty wife" (to whose heart, alas! Mirabeau had already laid siege) to smuggle him into the prisoner's presence. It was

Tonneau who gave way there to explosions of wrath at the injustice of Gabriel's fate and Gabriel who calmed him.

To be sure, Tonneau's visit did far more harm than good. By January of the new year, 1775, Émilie had heard all about the canteen-keeper's wife, and the canteen-keeper himself had written her, furiously describing his wrongs and confirming all Tonneau's scandalous reports.

No biographer of Mirabeau can ignore that " deep, burning, and tempestuous vice " of his nature, that " passion effrénée " for women which was his shame and his curse, the ruin of his private life, and a leaden weight and hamper on his public career. But, while much of the onus of that fearful sin must rest on his character, the impartial judge will not deny that he brought with him, innocent, into the world an awful heritage of licentiousness, which was fed and fostered by education, by example, and by the appalling depravity of the age in which he lived. Mirabeau's guilt lies not in the possession of abnormal passions, nor even in the development of them, but in the vehement abandon of all self-control with which he yielded to them.

Lucas de Montigny, who had access to his papers, destroyed some of them which bore the most hideous witness to this dark blot on his moral life. Such a destruction is always open to hostile criticism. But in the case of Mirabeau, the biographer knows enough of that black thread running through his existence to apprehend the man as he was. No more is required. To gaze so long at the feet of clay that one forgets to raise one's eyes to the head of gold

is, alas! too commonly now the attitude of the world to its heroes. It should be grateful to Mirabeau's adopted son that, with regard to Mirabeau, he has made this base, mean, and flagrantly unjust attitude exceedingly difficult.

In January, the prisoner was writing to and receiving from his sisters, Caroline and Louise, letters conveyed, the Bailli said, between the legs and the gaiters of some villains whose business took them to the Château d'If. But the Bailli was beginning to warn his brother that people said he was "a little hard" to his children; and really, you know, if one imprisoned all the young men who are in debt, there would be no one but grey-beards in the streets! Then, too, M. d'Alègre's reports were "hotly" favourable. So, partly as a reward for good behaviour, and partly to get him further away from the intriguing neighbourhood of Madame de Cabris, the father obtained a change of prison and air for his son, and an order to have him removed to the fortress of Joux, near Pontarlier, on the Swiss frontier.

In the beginning of the year 1775, there was secretly printed in Switzerland that work which had occupied Mirabeau on his honeymoon and during his exile in Manosque—*The Essay on Despotism* (*Essai sur le Despotisme*).

This, the first important writing of his life, was too severely condemned by himself, and is apt to be too lightly estimated by his biographers. For in this *Essay* one sees all the great tribune in embryo, his supreme confidence and daring, his passion, his exuberance, his amazing knowledge, his infinity of

wit and talent, and his brain full of execution and resource. In May, 1774, Louis XVI. had ascended the throne of his fathers. What a chance here to point out that a despotic monarchy is not the worst of governments, because "despotism is not a form of government at all; it is the annihilation of all the essential forms of administration; it is a state against nature. . . ." Beneath it "justice and citizenship have no existence." It is "to kingdoms what idleness is to the individual—the worst of all the vices." Kings—"kings are but the salaried servants of their subjects and must submit to the conditions on which their salary is paid, or lose it." But in France now, alas! one does not dare even to pity her sorrow—such pity is forbidden, "liberty is licence, truth is a crime, and courage a danger."

Bold words these, in 1775. Their swing and vigour make the dull, printed page glow, even now, with life and interest. The conditions that Mirabeau deplored have, in France at any rate, long passed away; but the spirit and the language in which he deplored them are surely among those things which can claim immortality. Against sacerdotal despotism he raises no voice, not, as he told Madame de Monnier, "from ignorance or cowardice," but "solely through haste and negligence."

By the October of 1775, *Despotism* had gone through two editions in six weeks at Neufchâtel, but was only then just beginning to create a sensation in France—too great for its author's peace.

The Marquis having received the order for his son's removal to Joux—on May 25, 1775, Mirabeau arrived at prison No. III., or—if the military prison

at Saintes be counted—prison No. IV. He was certainly becoming a connoisseur in jails. This one, justly estimated, was really not so bad—" an owls' nest enlivened by a few invalids," on the whole more cheerful than Château d'If, and more liberty allowed. M. de Saint-Mauris, the governor, began by taking the usual fancy to his charge. Gabriel was permitted not only to go into neighbouring Pontarlier, but actually to have a lodging and to sleep there, and to frequent the society of the neighbourhood. He hunted and took little trips into Switzerland, where he arranged for the printing of his *Essay*. He had plenty of books; and the Marquis sent him more —on Political Economy.

He found the usual woman to fall in love with—a certain Bélinde this time, " who had nothing to lose in point of reputation." In short, a prison *pour rire* —if one only succeeded in keeping in the governor's good graces! Mirabeau would have done that easily enough—but for one thing.

CHAPTER VI

SOPHIE DE MONNIER

In 1754, when Mirabeau was a child of five, a little girl was added to the family of the excellent President de Ruffey, of Dijon—the Président des Comptes of that city, a most worthy and cultivated man—a friend, visitor, and correspondent of the great Voltaire.

Madame de Ruffey was the gentlest and best of women—with a little narrowness in her virtue her only imperfection.

The new daughter, who was named Marie-Thérèse-Sophie, and had already three brothers and two sisters, was educated in a Burgundian convent until she was fifteen. That age was then accounted marriageable, and her parents introduced to her, as a possible husband, the famous Buffon, who was a friend of her father's, had been married before, and was more than sixty years old, but eminently handsome and agreeable. Sophie does not appear to have objected to him as a husband; or to have greatly lamented when domestic circumstances broke off the engagement. Two years after, on July 1, 1771, she married the Marquis de Monnier, President of the Chambre des Comptes at Dôle, who was also a widower and about

the same age as Buffon. Sophie, and most of Sophie's biographers, assert or imply that her parents forced her into this marriage. There is not the slightest evidence for this. True, M. de Monnier was old: but Sophie had not objected to Buffon for this reason. To say that she was in love with her Marquis would certainly not be true. But she was a little bored at home, and she had a very small *dot,* which would necessarily limit her choice, while M. de Monnier was exceedingly rich. *Enfin,* one must marry somebody; and if I marry you, I can have constantly with me my dearest girl-friend and confidante, Mademoiselle de Saint-Belin, who has no money because her horrid brother has it all. These, reduced to plain English, were the reasonings of the bride.

The first eighteen months of her marriage were certainly not unhappy. M. de Monnier was a rather formal and punctilious personage; a little parsimonious, but of life well ordered for the time in which he lived. Madame de Ruffey asserts that at first Sophie was contented. Sophie declared afterwards that she only feigned contentment. In reality she seems to have been, as she had been at home, bored. She had a little flighty, romantic head, full of nonsense and Rousseau, and M. de Monnier, if you please, wants me to help him with his stupid business and accounts, and is always worrying me—the monster!—to look after his house and the servants. "I see nothing—not even a cat," and I have to play dummy whist *ad nauseam* with my husband. True, Pontarlier is near—the Marquis had a house in that town, and a *château* in the country—" but there I have

only "spies" and "critics." In short, Sophie, says Sophie herself, when it was her interest to prove herself a much-injured personage, looked over her clothes and went to sleep: went to sleep and looked over her clothes, in dismal alternation. She was twenty-one and divinely pretty; and there was not a soul, but a husband, to admire the prettiness—or even a soul to be jealous of it but Mademoiselle de Saint-Belin. *Triste,* dreadfully, this—and an excuse for any follies! Sophie's real excuse lay in the fact that she was a wife and no wife—united to a man, Mirabeau wrote hereafter, with whom she had nothing in common but his armorial bearings, his livery, and his name. Add to the danger of that position a wealthy idleness, the universal corruption of manners, and the fact that the girl had a vapid little mind with nothing legitimate to fill it. Pontarlier was a garrison town. Before very long there was a delightful young officer, called Sandone, who acted in theatricals, and wrote Madame de Monnier adoring letters, till his duties fortunately removed him from her neighbourhood. Then there was a M. de Montperreux, who permitted her to admire him—and to pay his debts for him; and, finally, there was M. de Saint-Mauris himself.

In June, 1775, Sophie de Monnier first met Mirabeau at a dinner-party given by the governor in the Castle of Joux.

It is necessary to picture her at this time as a girl lovely with the most exquisite and the most evanescent of all loveliness—that of colouring and expression—tints of roses and lilies, the most lustrous dark eyes, the most perfect fair skin, a face always

dimpling into smiles and soft vivacity, a figure rounded and young, and everywhere about her the breathings of dawn and of spring.

She had, too, the most delicious little air of modesty and timidity; and, from rarely having anything to say, was the most perfect listener. When she did talk, she evolved those impulsive, romantic notions, which are only not silly from the rosebud lips of one-and-twenty. And then, too, she was deliciously unhappy! Take these circumstances and facts all together, take Mirabeau's temperament and position, and the only wonder is he did not fall in love with Sophie de Monnier far sooner and deeper than she did with him. Of course, he met her one day after the dinner, and entirely by chance, out walking. And then, entirely by chance again, at a *fête champêtre* and a ball. It was rather a novel, exciting situation for the prisoner to steal away his jailer's divinity, while he threw dust in that jailer's eyes by pretending to be still in love with Bélinde.

During June, there were grand doings at Pontarlier to celebrate the King's coronation. Everybody—and chiefly M. de Monnier—entertained largely. Mirabeau was often at his house, and though he said afterwards that the Marquis saw, and connived at, his own dishonour, there is no proof at all of such an assertion. If the Marquis saw anything, he saw only a young man's very natural admiration for such a pretty creature as Sophie. At this time there *was* nothing but admiration—though a dangerous one.

Presently, Sophie went with her husband into the country. In August, Mirabeau was writing to his

father, through his uncle, urgently begging to be released from Joux that he might play a "good father's part to my little boy"—to prove to you that at twenty-six I am not "wholly incapable of good." That in his mind there was a desire not only to be set free, but to be set free from temptation, seems more than probable from the fact that in the next month he wrote what he justly called "the strongest, most pressing, and most eloquent letter" to his wife, begging her to join her fate to his, to fly with him to Switzerland, "where we can live on our income and the results of my work. . . . If she had consented, I swear that I would have broken my chains. . . . But this proposition was too noble for her. I was wrong to look for fruit from a tree that only bore flowers. I received a few icy lines, with a gentle insinuation that I was mad." Those "few icy lines" seemed to him to excuse in some sort his after-conduct. He had given his wife a last chance before he became "drunk on all the philtres of love." "God knows," he wrote to Madame du Saillant, "I am not so guilty as if she had replied to that letter."

In a very few weeks the Monniers came back to Pontarlier. Sophie would like, if you please, the loan of some books to supplement her education, which has been indeed most imperfect. Of course, Mirabeau brings the books himself. In the first of the *Six Dialogues,* written in Vincennes, and which contain the more or less veracious history of their early love, this interview is described. They abuse the clergy and M. de Saint-Mauris—now the implacable enemy of them both. In Dialogue II. Sophie tells the history of her life, *à la* Rousseau, and

of her *affaire du cœur* with M. de Montperreux. Dialogue III. is taken up with Mirabeau trying to vanquish Sophie's scruples concerning her attachment for him. By Dialogue IV. they are "Gabriel" and "Sophie"—full of esctasies and beautiful, specious sentiments. "My Sophie . . . will you not be performing a sacred duty in leaving M. de Monnier? . . . My wife in the sight of heaven. . . . Cease to esteem you? Never!"—all the old sophistries, in fact, and much taking in vain the name of the cardinal virtues—always politely spelt with capitals.

Then Sophie had a dreadful quarrel with her dearest Mademoiselle de Saint-Belin, and appeared to her lover exquisitely touching and tearful. She adored him quite openly. Was a Mirabeau likely to reject so romantic a devotion? Before the year 1775 was over the diary of his love records, *Je fus heureux.*

It is generally assumed, because it is at once more romantic and more natural to assume, that he fell at once madly, deeply, wildly in love with Sophie de Monnier, and that in the fierceness of that illicit devotion he carried her off—a little fluttering and reluctant bird—from her home and her duty. But the real state of the case is more truly and baldly summed up by Sorrel—"Mirabeau loved her a little, never respected her, and managed to pervert her." "I was very unhappy," he wrote himself, "and unhappiness doubles the susceptibilities." An exquisitely pretty, sentimental little person fell at his feet, adoring her hero, "young, persecuted, unfortunate, and armed with all the seductions of the most fascinating nature that ever breathed." He was no

more the man to raise her up and bid her go away, than he was the man hereafter to plead the mean excuse, "The woman tempted me and I did eat." But it remains a fact that he yielded less to his passion for her than to her passion for him. She herself, by this time, was enamoured not only of her lover, but, like Lydia Languish, of romance, and determined to gratify her taste for it to the full.

Saint-Mauris, with his sight quickened by jealousy, had soon seen the real state of affairs. He wrote therefore to the Marquis de Mirabeau and complained that a certain seditious *Essay on Despotism* was beginning to be publicly attributed to his prisoner; and that furthermore that prisoner had given a promissory note to a tradesman who had supplied him with clothes suitable for the winter at Joux—persons under *lettres de cachet* not being legally permitted to sign promissory notes. The Marquis was delighted at an excuse for adding to the severity of his son's punishment, and wrote back at once to advise for him "a cell, dry and healthy, but well bolted and barred": and, above everything, do not let him write or speak to any person outside the castle!

Before these drastic orders had been carried out, Mirabeau and Saint-Mauris had a regular battle-royal—in words—in which Saint-Mauris threatened the prisoner with the loss of all his privileges, and commanded him to return to the castle then and there (the interview took place outside it). "Give me four days' grace," pleads Mirabeau of the beguiling tongue, "just to avoid the scandal and talk there will certainly be if I do not appear at the Monniers'

ball on January 14th." Saint-Mauris was weak enough to consent. If Sophie had been delighted at the thought of two lovers fighting over her, she was still more delighted, after the ball, to smuggle Mirabeau back to her husband's house, where he actually lay concealed in a room next to hers for two whole days. The usual waiting-woman was in the lovers' confidence. It was all just like a chapter of Rousseau or a scene out of a comedy!

On one of those delicious days of hiding, Mirabeau found time to plead for his liberty in a very manly letter to the Comte de Saint-Germain, Minister of War. "I have been kept in prison eighteen months for an affair in which I behaved as a man of honour. . . . I am a gentleman and a Frenchman. I am called Mirabeau, and am a captain of dragoons. . . . I only ask to defend myself against false accusations." The next day, January 16th, he wrote to Saint-Mauris, openly accusing him of being himself in love with Madame de Monnier, and so animated with hatred towards his rival.

But the Monniers' house was really too dangerous a refuge. Yet, as the refugee wrote to Madame du Saillant in 1780, "Ask yourself if, in the madness of a first love, a fortnight of a possession so intoxicating, but so furtive and so stormy, could suffice to my senses or my soul?" "I decided to hide in Pontarlier." The lax moral code of the age is well illustrated by the fact that, though they knew his errand, Mirabeau found there three or four quite reputable householders ready to shelter him. Sophie used to steal out to him with food and books; and in the night and the darkness he would creep back

to her. For a month they were undetected. But one dark evening M. de Monnier's servants captured Mirabeau, prowling most suspiciously about the garden of the Monnier house. "Very well," says he, "take me to your master." If the grave and punctilious Marquis had begun to be suspicious of the little flighty wife, with her easy lies and her pretty, soft sentiments, he had but just begun. Certainly the present situation was—parlous. But Mirabeau carried it off with such a fine, careless air, and had such a beautiful story all ready—with the details in perfect order and correctness—of his having just come from Berne *en route* from Paris, and, late as it was, feeling he *must* call on his good friends the Monniers. His Sixth Dialogue contains an account of this interview. The reader is made to sympathise, as all the eighteenth century sympathised, not with the husband, whose worst fault was to be old and prosy, and whose greatest crime was to have married a pretty girl who had considered the age and prosiness well balanced by his money—but with the lover, young and daring, and with Madame, lovely, trembling, and deceitful in the background. Mirabeau's fluent eloquence convinced the Marquis for the moment—but for the moment only. A priest told him what was fast becoming the talk of Pontarlier. M. de Monnier remembered too late a dozen suspicious circumstances. He began to superintend Sophie's goings and comings. She declared he forbade his servants to do her commissions. He preaches me sermons! With an air of outraged innocence she demanded to be sent back to her mother. Her husband rightly thought she could hardly be under better

guardianship—and then, too, she would be out of the neighbourhood of temptation. She arrived at her old home at Dijon on Sunday, February 25, 1776. Four days later, Mirabeau was established in that town, in rooms she had prepared for him.

From henceforth their love-story swings on with the rush and all the romantic coincidence one often sees on the stage, and seldom in real life.

There is a ball given at Dijon by the Provost of Burgundy, M. de Montherot, at which Sophie and Mademoiselle de Saint-Belin, restored to amity and confidence, are strictly chaperoned by Sophie's mother. All of a sudden the door opens. Enter a very large, ungainly young man, with deep scars all over his face, a mighty head of hair, and eyes bright, burning, and bold. The Marquis de Lancefoudras! He bears such a startling likeness to Some One Else that Sophie nearly faints. He dances the first dance with Mademoiselle de Saint-Belin. And then Madame de Ruffey, having looked hard at the Marquis, sweeps her charges indignantly from the room. (These details Mademoiselle de Saint-Belin, who died as late as 1842, left behind her in manuscript.)

The next day Madame de Ruffey denounced the Marquis de Lancefoudras to the Provost of Dijon. A marquis? An escaped prisoner, and of the worst character. It is almost unnecessary to say that Mirabeau gained the Provost's good graces as in the twinkling of an eye. He was put on parole not to escape, and bidden to await ministerial orders in the room Sophie had taken for him. A stern sister who was a canoness, scornful brothers, an irate father,

and even the fact that Sophie slept with her sister or with her mother, did not prevent her getting up quietly in the middle of the night, and spending hours with her lover in the cold March winds and the darkness of the garden.

However, even the posts of those times arrived eventually. In twenty days after his arrest by the Provost—that is, on March 21, 1776—the order came from the Government through Malesherbes, the successor of La Vrillière, committing Mirabeau to the Château of Dijon, but desiring that M. de Montherot should arrange with M. de Changey, the governor of that prison, to make the prisoner as free and as comfortable as was possible.

On March 24th, the Ruffeys sent Madame de Monnier back to her husband at Pontarlier.

CHAPTER VII

FLIGHT

SINCE the January of this year 1776, Mirabeau had a determined advocate in the person of his mother. True, she petitioned the authorities in his behalf not because she loved him, but because she hated his father. The fact that "that wicked scoundrel of a female," as her husband called her, was interceding for Gabriel of course made the Marquis doubly furious with him. He cursed him with even more than his usual explicitness; told Malesherbes that he altogether washed his hands of such a villain; and composed a Memoir applauding his own conduct and abusing his son as lustily as ever.

Malesherbes—hereafter the "good old hero" who formally defended Louis XVI. at his trial—was as economical with *lettres de cachet* as La Vrillière had been lavish with them. The Marquis had really had a great many! Malesherbes, therefore, summoned a council of the commission of *lettres de cachet* to look into the affairs of this fighting family—with which the concerns of Monniers, Ruffeys, and Saint-Mauris were now inextricably confused. He told the Marquise de Mirabeau to persuade her son and his father to make up their differences, which, of course, did not suit her at all.

In April, in the Château of Dijon, Mirabeau wrote to Malesherbes four Memoirs presenting the facts of his case as he saw them, and with the magic touch of that oratory to which the world was soon to listen. He denied a design of eloping with Madame de Monnier—not untruthfully. Loménie, whom no one will accuse of judging him too partially, acquits him of an intention in April of doing what he certainly attempted to do in May. At the end of the month the decision of the committee on *lettres de cachet* was made public. It hinted that Mirabeau's imprisonment must have a term set to it, and bade the Marquis be quick and settle his son's debts, as he had undertaken to do. Malesherbes was just going out of office. One of his last ministerial acts was to sign an order on April 30, 1776, committing Gabriel-Honoré to a new prison, that of the Citadel of Doullens in Picardy; at the same time conveying to him, said Mirabeau thereafter, a broad hint to escape before that order could be carried out. After seven months' captivity, with the hot blood tingling in his veins, with Sophie adoring him and imploring him to come to her, the very ghost of a hint would have sufficed.

At first the prisoner shammed illness to prevent his removal. Then he made an abortive attempt to escape, which he was able to persuade the authorities —they certainly must have been winking hard—was not an attempt at all. On the night of May 24th or 25th, with the assistance of two young men friends, natives of Dijon, Mirabeau escaped from the prison of that city to Verrières, a little village just over the Swiss frontier. From Verrières, where he concealed

himself under the name of the Comte de Beaumont, he sent his two friends to arrange matters with his mistress.

By this time Sophie's position was, as she said herself, *désolante* indeed. Her brothers and sister, she declared, maligned her to her friends, continually tormented M. de Monnier to fresh vigilance in guarding her, and made him intercept her letters.

Her own to Mirabeau are in every sense the most piteous compositions—and leave but a melancholy impression of her mind and her modesty. Yet stupid, coarse, and commonplace as they are—Mirabeau had not yet formed her intellect and her style—there is in them all the same a sort of infantine charm and naïveté, which perhaps made the childish fascination of Sophie herself. They soon swelled into a passionate cry to be taken away. You have sown the wind and you leave me to reap the whirlwind! Let me follow you—through all time and space—so long as you do not leave me here to the cruel persecution of my relations, and the mistrust of my old husband! Let me come to you or I shall poison myself!

What was a lover to do? "I had brought her to the edge of the abyss—could I throw her in?" he wrote thereafter in extenuation of his conduct. He felt rightly he owed everything to the woman he had compromised, and was brought by her to regard an elopement as the only reparation he could make her.

"His generosity more than his passion prompted him," says his adopted son.

Only, surely, by carefully closing his eyes to the most obvious facts, the sentimental biographer has

been able to avoid seeing that Madame de Monnier was passionately determined to be eloped with. Mirabeau's sin with regard to her bears the date, not of the summer of 1776, but of the winter 1775.

Twice in this May or June, while he lay concealed at Verrières, Sophie had made ready to join him, and twice her sister found her out and stopped her. Her mother begged M. de Monnier to put her in a convent. He replied he believed his wife to be repentant, and that guard her behind bolts and bars he would not. But Verrières soon grew too dangerous even for Mirabeau's audacity. If it was close to Sophie, it was close to Saint-Mauris too. He went on to Geneva, and then to Thonon. He had now on his track not only government officials, but private police spies employed by his father.

At Thonon, he was joined by Madame de Cabris, who knew all about his intrigue, and entered into it with the keenest zest and energy, pushing and hurrying it on, and enjoying herself amazingly.

To avoid recognition by her father's spies—and to add to the excitement—she had ridden from Lyons (where she was living for the time in a convent separated from her husband) dressed as a boy and fully armed. The inevitable Briançon was in attendance. Mirabeau, with them, pushed on to the French frontier, and leaving Madame de Cabris behind them at Lyons to put their pursuers off the track, he and Briançon fled southward to Provence, where they hoped to draw out an elopement campaign in comparative safety. All the time Sophie was writing to Madame de Cabris and, it is said, forwarding

jewels and money on which Sophie and Mirabeau were to start their joint *ménage*. Once in Provence —near his own country and his father's house— Mirabeau met and dined with Tonneau, and then hid at Lorgues, near Draguignan. The Marquis's detectives tracked him there, but Briançon managed to put them off the scent and they returned to Lyons, where Louise, who was *comédienne* to her finger-tips, and who brought into this affair, says Loménie, "a fertility of mind and an energy of character which would have sufficed to govern a kingdom," assured them with innocent candour that her brother was really at Lorgues. By the time they had returned there he had of course left it, and was on his way by the mountains of Nice, Turin, and the Great Saint-Bernard to the village of Verrières.

What were his feelings during these exciting weeks? The love of adventure was still quick in him though he was boy no longer. At the end of his quest—nearer every day—was a woman lovely enough to have made far duller pulses than his beat high. Yet one begins to see now in Mirabeau, for the first time, that dark and sombre strain which awed the Assembly as it listened to the orator, which struck fear into the hearts his tenderness and generosity had won, and impressed the great mass of persons who knew him, or who had only even heard of him, as with something mysterious and sinister. His enemies have derived that "black drop" from his vices, and his friends from his monstrous genius. Perhaps it should rather be attributed to the taint in the Mirabeau brain which, developed, sent one of his sisters and his grandmother mad—and which, in

himself and his father, certainly carried licentiousness to the verge of mania.

But he was yet young, and if things dark and ugly brooded over him, he could still put them away. He reached Verrières safely. He conveyed a message to Sophie. On the evening of August 24th, when her husband as usual summoned the household servants to prayers, their mistress was not to be found. "I cruelly abused his confidence," she wrote five years later; "the very day I left him he said, 'I trust you.'" Four hours after he had spoken the words, in the deepening summer twilight, his wife, dressed as a boy, and with one servant only for guide and confidant, crept from his house, scaled the garden walls, took a mountain path leading over the frontier to Switzerland, and, reaching Verrières, gave herself up, as Mirabeau said, "to my honour and to my faith."

For a while, at least, he forgot "all the *traverses* of his life in the arms of love." What matter that the village inn in which they spent their brief twenty days of honeymoon was inconceivably squalid and wretched? What matter even if they were still in danger, though being in Switzerland in less imminent danger, from the government authorities and the private police spies? What matter even if they possessed (Mirabeau said it was all they had) only one hundred and fifty louis and the same sum in jewelry? They had youth, summer, and each other. The most rigid virtue need hardly grudge such poor frailty its delights, for history and biography have proved nothing if not the brevity and peril of such stolen joys, and the fact that the one thing in all the world

most fatal to real and lasting love is the indulgence in illicit passion.

Before the honeymoon was over, the lovers had begun to realise the impossibility of living entirely on the emotions and their one hundred and fifty louis. If, as was afterwards declared, Sophie had brought with her, or had sent to Madame de Cabris, "rich spoils" from her husband's house, where were they now? In urgent need of money, Mirabeau decided to move to Holland, where he was known as the author of the *Essay on Despotism*, where the French censorship had no sway, and where he hoped to get orders for translations from some of the great libraries.

On September 26, 1776, he and Sophie arrived at Rotterdam; and a few days later at Amsterdam, where, under the name of M. and Madame de Saint-Mathieu, they took up their abode in lodgings in the house of a tailor named Lequesne. When M. de Monnier sent to them there a confidential servant to make money arrangements with his wife, she and Mirabeau—fearing such an offer suggested their parting from each other—declined even to see the man.

If there has been any lucky writer who found the first few steps of the literary ladder short and easy, that writer was certainly not Mirabeau. For three months, he hunted for remunerative work unsuccessfully. During this time he wrote his spirited *Warning to the Hessians* (*Avis aux Hessois*), but this was not printed until 1777, and neither made nor was intended to make money. At the end of these three months, work did begin to come in. By writ-

ing from nine in the morning until six at night Mirabeau could earn a louis a day. He translated from the English the first volume of the *History of England* by Catherine Macaulay, and a part of the *History of Philip II. of Spain* by Robert Watson. Then he wrote a little pamphlet on music with the bizarre cognomen, *The Reader will Find a Title* (*Le Lecteur y mettra un Titre*), a tract for an association of Freemasons (Mirabeau was a Freemason himself), and a very feeble burlesque story called *Parapille*—his only excursion into verse. Sophie knew a little Italian and by giving lessons in it helped their *ménage.* Her lover was teaching her to improve her own mind. To be with a man who was as prodigal of rich knowledge as he was of his tenderness was in itself an education.

Though their prospects were scarcely exhilarating and their home mean and poor exceedingly, he could describe their life in it as at once "gay and quiet." An hour's music with Sophie—she delighted in it, as he did—could dispel their blackest anxieties and make them forget all their privations. She had still the power to soften the sharp brusqueness of his impatient temper. He often offended in this way even now, and speaks of that offence himself. What he does not speak of is the passionate generosity with which he confessed and repented.

In this autumn, he was formally sentenced, as punishment for his fight with the Baron de Villeneuve-Mouans, to pay the Baron six thousand livres, and to *blâme,* which meant the loss of all civil rights. This decree was still unrevoked when, the greatest man in France, Mirabeau led the National Assembly.

He rendered it null by taking not the slightest notice of it.

Throughout this year he had continued in constant correspondence with his mother, whom Sophie addressed as "belle-maman." In this December of 1776, he wrote at her prompting a scurrilous *Memoir,* in which he defamed his father as well as Madame de Pailly and the du Saillants. Six hundred copies of this *Memoir* he sent to his mother for French circulation. He confessed and deplored its authorship in a letter written three years later, and advanced as its excuses his own "cursed facility for writing," "the entreaties of my poor mother," and the fact that "my father has more than once overstepped in his conduct to me the rights of one man over another. . . . Still . . . I have repented of it . . . and I do repent."

Bearing the date of December 15, 1776, purporting to be written in London, and addressed to the editors of the *Literary Gazette* (a French newspaper published in Holland), there appeared a certain "Anecdote to add to the Collection of Philosophic Hypocrisies" which contained this scathing sentence: "The Friend of Men was the friend neither of his wife nor his children. He preached virtue, well-doing, order, and morality, while he was himself the worst of husbands and the harshest of fathers."

Mirabeau denied he wrote this "Anecdote," which was later added to the third edition of his *Essay on Despotism.* But taking into consideration the time at which it was published, and the facts that it bore his signature of the moment, S. M.—Siant-Mathieu —and is assigned to him by his adopted son, there

is as little doubt that he wrote it as that he was ashamed of it afterwards.

This "Anecdote" and *Memoir* are the only personal defence of himself against his father he voluntarily published; and when his impetuous character and the provocation he received from that father are considered, the marvel is that the defence is not far lengthier and fiercer.

Some copies both of the *Memoir* and the "Anecdote" were sent to Sartines, the head of the French police, whom the Marquise de Mirabeau mistakenly supposed to be an ally of her own. Sartines confiscated most of them and sent the rest to the Friend of Men himself. As an immediate result, he put his furious old head together with the heads of Sophie's angry relatives, and set about procuring through the French Embassy at The Hague the extradition and the arrest of Sophie and Mirabeau.

In the meantime, printed at Cleves early in 1777, there appeared Mirabeau's *Warning to the Hessians,* in which he loudly called upon the six thousand Prussians whom Frederick II., the landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, had promised to England to fight the so-called insurgents in America, to refuse to act as the mercenary satellites "of such an odious tyranny." Mirabeau's first original work had attacked monarchical despotism at home, and his second, fitly, attacked monarchical despotism abroad. For his third, against the civil despotism of *lettres de cachet,* his father had already provided him with a generous supply of ample first-hand knowledge, and was now well on the way to provide him with a great deal more.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRISONER OF VINCENNES

In the beginning of May, 1777, there appeared in Amsterdam, thinly disguised as a cavalry officer, a M. de Bruguières, the emissary of the French Government and of the Marquis de Mirabeau. Gabriel and Sophie rightly and immediately suspected that his office was to arrest them. But they were, as Gabriel put it, "chained" by debt in Amsterdam. True, the French consul had already been to Mirabeau and offered him money, passport, and freedom if he would give up Madame de Monnier. He hid that offer from Sophie. She would have implored him to leave her to her fate. All the heroines of the novels resorted to that courage of the uncourageous—suicide—when destiny became too complicated; and Mirabeau's romantic little mistress would not have been behind them.

On May 14th, hearing they were to be arrested the next day, they made one forlorn attempt to escape. Mirabeau went out of the house first and alone, to avoid suspicion. Sophie was to follow him. He heard she had been arrested, and came back to her, to find her with Bruguières in her company and a phial of poison in her hand. The culprits were

taken to the prison of Amsterdam. Their position and prospects were indeed alike deplorable. Without money and with every man's hand against them —before them lay, for Mirabeau, imprisonment in the Keep of Vincennes, and for Sophie, detention in Sainte-Pélagie, the house of correction for the lowest women of Paris. The savage old Marquis would much rather Gabriel should have been transported to the Dutch colonies: "if he got himself hanged there, it would be incognito," whereas now "he will simply be broken on the wheel, bearing our name."

But the criminal had still one weapon left him. He won Bruguières—the Marquis's "renard roué" and trusted envoy—and made him swear to carry letters between himself and Sophie, and to beg for Sophie a less cruel prison-house than Sainte-Pélagie. The unhappy girl was now within a few months of motherhood. The Duc de Vauguyon, a French diplomatist and a friend of the Marquis, came to see her in the prison of Amsterdam, and touched by so much loveliness and so much sorrow, also pleaded for her against a fate so hard. The Marquis had to pay Gabriel's debts in the city, and the expenses of the journey with Sophie and Bruguières from Amsterdam to Paris; so that revenge in his case cannot have been wholly sweet. Like revenge in general, it was very unwise. The crime for which Mirabeau suffered nearly four years' imprisonment was one which in England to-day is considered fairly punished by a monetary fine and social ostracism. The hot glow of his passion for Sophie was already cooling when Bruguières arrested them in Amsterdam. The cruelty of their parting and of their fate fanned

the embers into flames; and to the Marquis de Mirabeau's furious folly is owing the length, the strength, and the notoriety of his son's illicit love, and that great sentimental classic of literature, the *Lettres d'Amour*.

Shortly after their arrival in Paris, the criminal judge of the Bailliage of Pontarlier, at the suit of the Marquis de Monnier, declared Mirabeau convicted of rape and seduction, and condemned him to be beheaded ("which will be carried out in effigy"), to pay an *amende* to the King, and forty thousand livres reparation to M. de Monnier; while Sophie was condemned to be imprisoned for life in a House of Refuge in Besançon. However, the culprits now being under royal authority, this amazing sentence of civil justice would only take effect after five years, if by then Mirabeau had not presented himself before the court for the case to be tried afresh. Sophie was committed first to a penitentiary in the Rue de Charonne: and in a few days moved to the Convent of the Saintes-Claires at Gien-sur-Loire.

On June 7, 1777, Mirabeau was incarcerated in the famous Keep of Vincennes.

Vincennes, a fortress on the outskirts of Paris, now chiefly attracts the visitor by its beautiful Bois. The *château* and the keep are shown to him only by special order. Built in the twelfth century and used as a royal residence, Henry V., King of England, died, as did many other illustrious personages, within the walls of the *château*. The great, massive, frowning donjon, or keep, harboured the State prisoners. Among them, before Mirabeau had its hospitality thrust on him, were Latude, the younger Crébillon,

Prince Charles Edward Stuart, Cardinal Retz, Diderot, the Abbé Morellet, the Marquis d'Argenson, and the Marquis de Mirabeau himself.

The keep is a five-storied tower, one hundred and seventy feet high, with walls seventeen feet thick. The room, which is now known as Mirabeau's, is not very small, and in its present well-swept and garnished state, although it does not even approach the almost perfect hygienic conditions which the fortunate British criminal enjoys to-day, certainly, as a prison, might be a good deal worse. But it must be remembered that when Mirabeau spent in it those forty-two months of his young manhood, it was not only, as it still is, very dark, but was also damp, filthy, abominably insanitary, and in winter bitterly cold. The Loménie, who are always of the opinion (though not in a Johnsonian sense) that Mirabeau touched nothing that he did not adorn, consider that he portrayed his prison as much worse than it was. Of course he did. He wanted to be released from it. But if he exaggerated, it was only exaggeration: and his complaints were based on very cruel facts.

For the first three weeks of his captivity he was without writing-paper or books, "without a shirt to change and without a razor," and was moreover feverish and ill. A little later, his clothes were dropping into rags; and his father, who was supposed to pay the expenses of his detention, allowed him in his own phrase "to want everything." Add to this that he was at first in absolute silence and solitude, that his only change, in those long summer days, was a rare walk, well guarded, in the walled gardens of

the keep. The governor, a M. de Rougemont, a *bourgeois* of illegitimate birth (whom Mirabeau abused pretty lustily in his book *On Lettres de Cachet*), did after a time dole out a few books and a scanty supply of paper for his prisoner's use—but such paper when filled had to be returned for the governor's inspection, and severe penalties were exacted for the slightest breach of rules.

The life was intolerable! But having writing materials a Mirabeau had much. He had soon composed an excellent letter, setting forth his sorrows and pleading their alleviation, to M. Le Noir, lieutenant-general of police in Paris, who, as a personal enemy of the Marquis, should in the nature of things be an active friend to the Comte.

Le Noir was an honest, kindly, enlightened man. As an immediate result of his appeal, Mirabeau was allowed to spend first a few hours and then the greater part of the day outside his cell, to walk pretty freely in the gardens or in the galleries of the keep, and to exchange a few words with the other prisoners. It is said that he was permitted to charm them by singing to them some of his best songs. Presently, the women about the place used to gather under the walls of the keep in order to see the great uncouth figure of that delightful prisoner appear on one of the galleries above. One day Le Noir took him to see the famous view over Paris from the top of the donjon. Then the old Marquis began to allow for his expenses the sum of six hundred louis, and out of it Mirabeau was permitted to get the books he wanted. And then—then—Le Noir permitted him to correspond with Madame de Mon-

nier, on condition that such letters should be read first by Boucher, *premier commis* of the secret police, and after the lovers had read them should be returned by them to that authority.

It must not be supposed—it will not be supposed by any one who has in the least realised the character of this burning Mirabeau—that he had sat down tamely and waited until the leisurely authorities permitted him to communicate with his mistress. No! while outside his cell was good-natured Bruguières, ready to act as secret postman, and within a character as vigorous and resourceful as his own, to invent an ink out of tobacco-water and to find a substitute for writing-paper was a matter of very little time indeed. When Sophie was still in the Rue de Charonne—and she only stayed there a few days—she was already inditing answers to her lover's epistles, sitting up behind the curtains of her four-post bed, in a room she shared with three other women, trembling lest the crackling of the paper should betray her occupation.

But now, since Le Noir had permitted a correspondence, Bruguières fortunately ceased to be necessary as an intermediary. (Fortunately, because by the beginning of 1778 Mirabeau had quarrelled with him over some valuables Bruguières had seized, or was supposed to have seized, in Holland.) Boucher, the *premier commis*—"bon ange" Mirabeau and Sophie called him—was indeed a most sympathetic person; and posterity owes to his delicacy the fact that the correspondence which passed through his hands is as long and as free as it is. Perhaps he does not always read it! Still—still, the fact remains

—that he *can* read every word if he choose! No lover will much wonder that these lovers were soon also carrying on a secret correspondence, which was conveyed under cover of the authorised one, written in invisible ink, made of lemon-juice, on the wrappers of the letters given to Boucher, or on the coverings of the little presents he permitted them to exchange.

In 1792, Manuel, Procureur Syndic of the Municipality of Paris, produced, under the title of *Lettres Originales de Mirabeau écrites du Donjon de Vincennes, recueillées par P. Manuel,* Mirabeau's first early letters conveyed through Bruguières, and all those he sent through Boucher. Manuel said he found some of them after the sack of the Bastille, when all the documents of the prisoners there and at Vincennes came into his hands; and that others were given to him by friends of the great orator. The *Recueil de Manuel* contains only Mirabeau's letters. M. Lucas de Montigny possessed most of those written by Sophie. From them he gives copious extracts. Some he destroyed as too indecent for preservation.

The *Lettres d'Amour,* as Mirabeau's letters to Sophie de Monnier are generally known, form one of the living romances of the world, beside which all the inventions of the novelist are tame and cold. They are indeed miscalled the Letters of Love. They are the Letters of Passion. Throughout they show only one aspect of the strongest and most mysterious emotion known to our race. Of love, the diviner and serener friend of passion, which lives side by side with it, and long outlives it, Mirabeau's con-

nection with Madame de Monnier gave him but the slightest idea.

The letters still glow and burn with the fever of that devotion, brief and earth-born, though not quite all unworthy. Genius, eloquence, devotion, bombast, vanity, energy, the widest sympathies, the homeliest details, a style "precipitate, abundant, uncondensed," virile, vehement, unchaste—"bursts of great heart and slips in sensual mire"—these are equally the characteristics of the letters to Sophie and of Mirabeau himself.

He tells his "amour si bonne" his opinions on liberty, on despotism, on religion, on the character of the French nation, on oratory, on women, on riches.

"If poverty makes a man sigh, riches make him yawn." "The whole secret of oratory is to feel passionately."

To-day it is a definition of Voltaire—"Voltaire who, more than any other human being, merited the admiration and the contempt of his fellows"; to-morrow of the dear patron-saint of all lovers, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "the god of eloquence, the apostle of virtue." The third day, this man, "free in chains," calls down the thunderbolt of the wrath divine not only on tyranny and despotism, but on all mean slaves, content with slavery. Then, he goes back again to that subject beside which all speculations are cold, beside which literature is a dead thing, and the world without distant and unimportant—love—our love—yours and mine. Now, after all, it is only for that love-story that most people read the letters to Sophie.

They are not either morally or intellectually the

best of such literature: but, morally as intellectually, they are very far from being the worst.

On January 7, 1778, Madame de Monnier gave birth to a little girl, who was called by the names of both her parents, Sophie-Gabrielle. From this date, Mirabeau's letters are full of her. It has been seen that he was a wise and fond father to the child of the woman he had been bidden to marry. How much more to the child of the woman he had been forbidden to love! She was only a few days old when he began to plan what she was to think, to do, and to look like. "From you, she must take her complexion, her graces, her virtues . . . from me only my voice, the few talents I have acquired, and all the inexpressible love I have for you." As for her education, *I* think, you know, that women are not naturally our inferiors, only "the quality of their mental fruit depends on the grafting, which is rarely good." Sophie-Gabrielle is not only to know everything, but to do everything. She was only three months old when her father was arranging that she should be taught presently to ride on horseback, to hunt, and to manage firearms! In the meantime, her mother is to beware of all the coddling, the fussing, and the old women's remedies, which make babies as a rule so delicate. This advanced and courageous parent went on to animadvert against the swathing and swaddling with which it was then the fashion to deform children's bodies, and, in one of the uncleanliest ages in history, positively dared to advise plenty of soap and water!

It is impossible not to suspect from these letters that it was the father who had the larger share of

tenderness as of wisdom. Once at least he apologises to Sophie for having been unnecessarily anxious over the little creature's welfare. His pride in her height and her weight, her health and her plumpness, is quite maternal; and when Sophie sent him the portrait of the little face, on which, living, he was never to look, his joy and delight were rapturous.

His infinite sympathy for Sophie's position as a mother is surely one of the redeeming traits of their passion, as his tender affection for his children is one of the redeeming traits of his own character.

But those long daily letters on their love and the fruit of it did not employ half the immense activities and leisure of this vehement prisoner. He could do more for Sophie than adore her in burning words. On January 24, 1778, he begged Le Noir to allow him to belong to a Paris library, and to have books *ad libitum;* and by March he was writing that he still had "the power and the need of occupation" —"never was that power more precious or that need greater than in my condition."

For Sophie's amusement he wrote those *Dialogues* which have been already quoted, and which contain the history of their passion and their elopement—*à la* Rousseau. For her, he made a translation of the great Roman poet, Tibullus, which was one of his longest and most laborious writings in prison, but which was designed, not the less, as an offering to his mistress's *beaux yeux,* was to be bound in blue leather, backed with white satin, with "Heures de Sophie" printed on it—and a little golden heart on the end of the bookmarker, which was to be made out of his hair! To translate poetry, one must be

oneself a poet: and this Mirabeau was none. Tibullus is a witness to his energy, not to his genius.

He also at least planned to translate for Sophie "the divine Richardson, and everything M. de la Place has had the insolence to mutilate in the *Tom Jones* of Fielding," and designed to pass to her, book by book, "the magnificent translation of Homer which Pope has made in English verse." For her he began a play, with their own love-story as a plot; and wrote his *Memoirs on Inoculation* to convert her to a belief in it—for the sake of Sophie-Gabrielle. It was too, alas! for the mother of his little daughter he translated the voluptuous *Basia* of Johannes Secundus (*Les Baisers de Jean Second*), and to her that he sent the epitome of a shameful original production called *My Conversion* (*Ma Conversion*).

When one considers what Lucas de Montigny has called "the fatal phenomenon of his physical organisation," it is not wonderful, though it is infinitely deplorable, that, cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, between dungeon walls in the fierce strength of his lusty manhood, he should have tried to quench his "sulphurous passions" in ink, and have wreaked on paper the obscene frenzy that raged in him. Of these unhappy writings, these shameful stains on his honour and genius, Carlyle describes "the pious Fils Adoptif" as saying "lamentably there is nothing to be said." From that *Conversion,* and still more from two further scurrilous productions, *The Spy Unveiled* (*Espion Dévalisé*) and the *Erotika Biblion,* all true friends of Mirabeau must, indeed, turn away sorrowful. There *is* nothing to be said—except that their author himself thereafter repented of them, and wrote from

London a few years later, of the *Erotika Biblion*, that he heartily regretted it should ever have been published—"what tempted me to write it, I cannot tell. When I have it in my power, I will suppress this and other books."

Besides these deplorable productions, he also found time to write a collection of fourteen stories. He sketched an *Essay on Tolerance*. He imitated Boccaccio's *Decameron*. He translated Ovid and Tasso. He composed a treatise on mythology, a grammar, an essay on literature, a tragedy, a collection of prose elegies, a pamphlet *On the Use of Regular Troops*, another *On the Obedience Due to Governments*, and a third *On Religious Houses*. Some of these works were lost. Some, not wonderfully, he had not time to finish: for one of the longest, the most influential, and the most characteristic of all his writings, written at any time, was begun after his entry into the Keep of Vincennes, and finished by the beginning of 1778.

The book *On Lettres de Cachet and State Prisons* (*Des Lettres de Cachet et des Prisons d'État*) was not published until 1782, and therefore belongs properly to that period. But it occupied the giant's share of Mirabeau's life and labour in Vincennes, and bears a steady witness to the noblest side of his intellect and character, as those *Conversions* and *Erotika Biblions* bring cruel testimony to the worst.

By the early part of 1778 it had become the prisoner's custom to read or write literally from daybreak until ten o'clock at night—save for that one hour—from eight to nine A.M.—when he walked in the prison garden. He pored over his books even at meals. He devoured classic literature and modern periodicals.

He went so far as to re-read and elaborately annotate his father's *Friend of Men.* The only way to prevent himself going mad with that seventeen feet of dungeon wall shutting him out from the rushing, busy life of the world beyond, was to work, work, work. He took copious extracts from the books he read—most characteristically not troubling himself to note the author's name—and then reproduced such passages, without any acknowledgment, in his voluminous writings. La Harpe speaks of his "larcins involontaires"—and they *were* involuntary very likely. Even Sophie occasionally detected his plagiarisms. "Cela ne te va pas de prendre les anecdotes des autres," she wrote to him one day; and the Marquis dubbed him "the magpie of wits and the jackdaw of orators." What did it matter? The thing was to be occupied night and day—with other men's writing or one's own—to have no time or vigour left to fling oneself in impotent fury against the bars of the cage and break one's heart for freedom.

Still, if it was worse than useless to let captivity drive one into madness or disease, it might be of great use to appeal against it.

On March 1, 1778, Mirabeau wrote to his father pleading his cause as only a Mirabeau could plead it. A little later he wrote to Maurepas, and, in May, direct to the King himself. The original manuscripts of these petitions are still to be seen in the Bibliothèque Méjanes at Aix-en-Provence, all written in that very neat, close, black caligraphy which, as Sophie justly complained, looks as if it was going to be easy to read, and is so very difficult.

He had also written to Amelot, the Secretary of

State. He was always pleading his cause, through the love-letters to Sophie, with Boucher and Le Noir. The prison doctor pleaded it for him in the summer. The prisoner's eyesight was bad. He had had attacks of colic, of fever, and of nephritis. He was actually ill and wretched enough to contemplate suicide. In July, and again in August, the doctor signed and sent to his father a certificate declaring his wretched health and ordering him baths. "I left the thing alone and did not answer," said the Marquis.

Then, in October, 1778, Fate raised her hammer and struck at the prisoner, and for him, one great blow.

CHAPTER IX

LOOSENING THE BOLTS

When Mirabeau had parted from his infant son at Manosque in 1774, it had been with the presentiment he should never see him again.

In the Château d'If he had thought and written much of him. In his letters to Madame de Cabris, planning the elopement with Sophie, he speaks of him tenderly. "The child . . . as you know," he wrote later, "was always present to my heart, even in the midst of the most passionate deliriums of love." The *Lettres d'Amour* contain many an allusion to him. The work *On Lettres de Cachet* finishes with an apostrophe to him full of eloquent affection. When he wrote it, the boy was already dead. Emilie had promised she would keep his father informed of his welfare. For seven months Mirabeau had not heard a word. At last he learned from "the lips of a stranger" that the hope of his house and the son of his loins had died with a fearful suddenness of convulsions, at the Château of Tholonet in Provence, on October 8, 1778. His mother was staying there with a certain Marquis de Galliffet and his son, the Comte de Galliffet, whom M. Dauphin Meunier, her latest and best biographer, has proved to have been her

lover. She was acting in some private theatricals at the time of the child's death; but there is no reason to suppose, though she was light and inconsequent enough, that she did not mourn him after her capacity. Her grief, indeed, was like the grief of the great majority of human beings—sincere enough, only short. Victor was five years old when he died, and a brave and pretty boy.

From the father who had never seen him since he was ten months old, there went up to heaven a sudden fierce cry of desolation. "My son . . . my son is dead," he wrote to Sophie. "I only cling to life through you and that other you . . . keep my daughter for me that she may not be punished for being so dear to me. . . . He is dead . . . all I know of him is his death." Then again to the Marquis, "This grief has filled my cup to the brim: there must surely be an end of sorrows when they become intolerable." The Loménie have doubted the reality of Mirabeau's grief. They find him here, as they find him always, only a clever fraud. Yet most readers surely, who thrust aside his biographers—foe or friend—and listen unprejudiced to his own words, will conclude that the chords he struck in the great gamut of human suffering were loud and angry, but not false.

The child's death smote at his grandfather's heart as well as at his father's. "We lost our child and our hope," the Marquis wrote to the Bailli. There was not now in the third generation a single male representative bearing the name of Mirabeau. Tonneau, though he was only twenty-five, was already, as Gabriel described him, "lost in debauchery" and

"damnably obstinate" about getting married. Marrying him, too, would be an expensive business, and the Marquis's money affairs were in their usual tempestuous confusion. In short, Gabriel-Honoré was still the most likely person to carry on the line of Mirabeau. His little boy's death loosened the first bolt of his dungeon door.

In January, 1779, a certain Dupont de Nemours, the "right hand of Turgot" and a friend and disciple of the Marquis de Mirabeau, was occasionally permitted to see the prisoner of Vincennes. The haughty Marquis was not of course going to eat his words, and appear to have a hand in undoing his own work and in liberating his son. But not the less Dupont was his agent, charged with a mission to propose to Gabriel-Honoré the simplest means of freeing himself and of carrying on the race of Mirabeau—a reconciliation with his wife.

If Émilie had been false and careless before he parted from her, he had double cause to hate her now. She had betrayed his private letters to her to his father. She had refused his last appeal before he eloped with Sophie de Monnier. She had neglected to give him news of their child. To humiliate himself before one whom he called his "cruellest enemy" and against whom he had, as he told Dupont, "more than enough evidence to ruin ten women," would be peculiarly galling to a man who had inherited the boiling pride of his race. Then, too, there was Sophie—the mother of Sophie-Gabrielle, the woman on whom he had brought social ruin and cruel personal suffering—and whom, when M. de Monnier had offered to take her back,

he had bidden refuse the offer with that energy of command which was peculiarly his.

But—liberty was sweet. Since he was nineteen—he was now thirty—he had spent in prisons a large proportion of his life. His health had gone from bad to worse. He had worked his eyes nearly into blindness. Sometimes for hours he would sit with his head in his hands, in one of the most wretched of earthly conditions—enforced idleness. "I am naked, suffering, ill, infirm," he wrote to Maurepas in February. The Ruffeys had taken his little daughter from her mother. That gave him many anxieties. He was always beseeching Sophie to insist on constant news of her. The good Le Noir went two or three times to see the baby, and came back and reported all the details of his visit to the father—and the father repeated them, very tenderly and picturesquely, to the mother. "Take care they do not educate her monastically," he wrote in April. "I ask your pardon, but I have seen few good things come out of convents."

Not many days later, on April 13, 1779, he had indited at the instigation of Dupont a cool and dignified overture of reconciliation with his wife.

If few good things come out of convents, a talent for self-sacrifice must be allowed to be one of them.

Mirabeau had not deceived Sophie. On May 9th he transcribed for her the letter he had written to Émilie, and Sophie replied by urging him to write less coolly. Directly she saw that if her lover was ever to be free, she must be sacrificed, with that disinterested generosity not seldom found in women of her frailty and surely a shining jewel in their tar-

nished crown, she accepted her fate with a devoted eagerness. Yet it must be said, because it was the fact and not to detract from her unselfishness, that her passion for Mirabeau, as his for her, had begun to end. As far back as the March of 1778 the poor girl had found a need for distraction, and had accepted such society as the convent at Gien had afforded her. Then Mirabeau had reproached her, and had had cause to reproach her, concerning her conduct with a M. de Rancourt, and with two priests who were the spiritual directors of the nuns of the convent. While, on his side, he had to write assurances that her "jealousy" of him, "unless you believe in sylphs and aerial beauties," was very unfounded, though one authority at least declares that, even in Vincennes, his *belle laideur* vanquished "the wife of the Governor," while the platonic sympathies of the famous Madame de Lamballe, who was a distant cousin of his mother's, had by 1779 "lengthened his chain" and brought him a few privileges.

Certainly, by that time, there creeps more and more often a note of sharpness into those Letters of Love. Sophie writes so very large, her epistles contain really nothing but ink! And then there were intervals of a fortnight in length when she positively did not write at all! The little daughter still bound the parents together. But for her, their passion had reached sooner its predestined end.

Mirabeau's overture to his wife had not the slightest effect, or rather only a bad effect. In this year she obtained a *séparation de biens* from her husband. "If he comes out of prison, I shall insist on a *séparation de corps.*"

So, by May 28th, he had written direct to his father, imploring his pardon in a letter in which he ate not only abundantly, but, after his nature, superabundantly, of very humble pie indeed, and to which, Mirabeau-like, he added a sonnet by Petrarch, expressing filial repentance! The Marquis took not the slightest notice of this effusion, which was conveyed to him by the accommodating Boucher. Through September, October, and November he laid siege to his father's heart through his uncle's. The Bailli had always been sorry for his nephew, and he did his best now to soften the head of the family towards him. In these winter months the official authorities of Vincennes reported to the Marquis that his son was suffering from stone and cataract, and added that they presumed he was not to be left to perish unhelped. "Riddled with wounds as I am, I was not to be alarmed by trifles like that," the tough old Marquis wrote to his brother; ". . . when I was assured that MM. de Maurepas, Amelot and Le Noir" thought seriously of the matter, "I replied that the two latter were too young to teach me lessons, and that the former had long known me as a man who could do his duty without assistance from other people."

It was the Marquis himself who, a little earlier, had reported to the Bailli another story of his disposing of adverse critcism on his paternal conduct. A friend met him and said to him, "Where is Madame your wife?" "I have put her in a convent." "And where is your son?" "In prison." "And Madame de Cabris?" "At a house of correction." "You have undertaken then to people such places?" "Cer-

tainly, sir, and if you were my child, you would have been in one a long time ago."

Early in the new year, 1780, Mirabeau was sounding the dispositions of his father-in-law; and it did seem now as if Émilie were a little influenced by the wishes the old Marquise would die rather than express, and the Bailli's openly evinced desires.

On May 23, 1780, little Sophie-Gabrielle, aged just two years, died at Deuil, near Montmorency, where she was at nurse. It was her father's task to break the news to her mother. In his exquisite solicitude for her sorrow, he recalled and revived his early love for his mistress. "My dearest, the moment has come to prove to me the breadth and depth of your affection . . . our child is dead, but I remain to you. . . . Do not say there is no more happiness for you in this world when you make all mine." Then, longing to comfort her, he dwells on mothers who have to weep for the children spared to them, and find by cruel experience "a dead sorrow is better than a living one." In a later letter he gently foretold, "After having bitterly wept our loss, the time will come—it is not far off, my dear—when some sweetness will mingle with the bitterness of that memory, and, if we still weep, our tears will be tears of tenderness rather than tears of sorrow."

Well, both his blossoms had fallen. If little Victor's death loosened the bolts of his prison, Sophie-Gabrielle's pushed its door ajar. The shaft of free light tempted to free air, free field—ambition, action, a career. The little girl's death had revived his tenderness for her mother, but it had not the less broken the tie that bound him to her.

In July, he wrote another, far longer and warmer letter to Madame de Mirabeau. He told Sophie of it. "She put all her romantic soul," said the Marquis, "into uniting him to his wife."

Then he appealed to Caroline. She lived in the house with their obdurate sire, and surely could do something! To her, to her husband, to the Bailli, Mirabeau poured out for three months torrents of ink and of eloquence—page upon page of pleading, reasoning, pathos. The Bailli answered sternly enough. But he was cruel only to be kind, and would fain have had his nephew demean himself meekly, and not give his father reason to complain that his very letters of submission and repentance "are in such a tone that Francis I. could not have got himself out of jail with more dignity." To humble his pride, and to be domineered instead of domineering, was the last and most painful sacrifice Gabriel-Honoré's nature could make. But he had to make it. Give me, if it must be so, only "a wider prison"! Exile me to Montauban and the safe custody of your friend, Lefranc de Pompignan. Take me out of this keep of Vincennes, and I will do my best—and you little know how good that best can be—to make a reconciliation between you and my mother, greatly desirable because, if the Marquise obtains her pending suit of separation, she will obtain too the absolute control of her property!

In those last months of the year 1780, though Mirabeau's volubility on paper only in pursuit of his freedom was amazing and overwhelming, yet he found time, too, to enter into a correspondence with a certain Mademoiselle Julie Dauvers, which began

by intriguing to find the young lady a post in the household of Madame de Lamballe, and, when he had a little more liberty, ended in a brief intrigue of another description.

In these *Lettres à Julie* he speaks of his father with real generosity and affection. But all the humility and kindliness in the world would have been in vain (the Marquis openly declared as much two years later), and Mirabeau would have "died in chains," if the autocrat's autocrat, Madame de Pailly, in a fit of erratic good nature, or growing tired of the prisoner's reiterated demands for his liberty, had not bidden the Marquis fling open the dungeon doors. Émilie and M. de Marignane still sat at Aix—giving neither word nor sign. But Gabriel-Honoré had had in September a thirteen-page letter from their lawyer. The old Marquis's fancy began to see Gabriel's sons about his knees.

On December 13, 1780, brother-in-law du Saillant appeared at Vincennes. The prisoner, ragged and unkempt, with scarcely clothes to cover him decently, was almost pitifully touched and submissive. Forty-two months of such a captivity as he had suffered were enough to subdue even the spirit of a Mirabeau. Du Saillant conducted him from the keep of Vincennes to its *château*—a prison still, but a prison *pour rire*. He at once began to correspond directly with his father. On December 25th, he had an interview with his mother. But in this unhappy family a child who had received the favour of one parent was instantly accounted a foe by the other. All Mirabeau's ardour of persuasion for peace and reunion

was in vain. Then he lost his temper: and the Marquise was furious and hysterical.

In January, 1781, Mirabeau finally shook the dust of Vincennes from his feet and came to Paris, where he lodged with the "bon ange," Boucher. He daily saw his parents' lawyers anent the suit of separation now immediately pending. One day he encountered his father face to face in the street. The son tossed his great head and "got out of the way as quickly as he could, and *I* went my way." The pair had not met for nine years; and if they were longing to fall on each other's necks and forgive and forget all, between them still stood the devil, Pride.

Gabriel-Honoré met his father's old friends daily in friendship. Madame de Rochefort pronounced him less ugly and as charming as ever. He went over to Versailles, where he coolly interviewed ministers on the Marquis's affairs. Then, having quarrelled with that worthless Briançon, Madame de Cabris's lover, the ex-captive, who has suffered so much from captivity, demands for this irregular brother-in-law a *lettre de cachet*. He did not get it, because the Mirabeau family had already had sixty *lettres de cachet*, and there had actually been a moment when the Marquis had had every single member of his family, save one, under lock and key. "These people will have to have a secretary of state to themselves," grumbled Maurepas. So Mirabeau went to Paris, flung himself into his father's cause against his mother with that abundant zeal and cleverness which can move mountains, constantly met the Marquis at his solicitors' or elsewhere, strictly in the way of business, and delighted him more and more

with his exceeding ability and penetration, and with a certain docility old Victor had not often had cause to remark in him before.

On May 16th, the Marquise gained her suit, and an order for separation of body and goods was given against her husband.

The poor baffled loser, sore and broken, could hold out against his culprit no longer. The next day, on the evening of Saturday, May 17, 1781, he yielded to the persuasions of his family. "Boucher and Dupont . . . brought Honoré to me suddenly. Tonneau said, 'Here is the prodigal son.' I said to Honoré, holding out my hand, that I had long forgiven the enemy, but that I now clasped a friend, and hoped one day to bless a son. So here he is in the house."

He would be a bold writer who would think to improve on the rugged simplicity of the Marquis de Mirabeau's narrative. The story of the reconciliation is best left to him.

One week after Gabriel's return to the Hôtel de Mirabeau, he suddenly disappeared from Paris, to avoid his creditors. Debt and gallantry were always among his motives for action, and both prompted him now.

At seven o'clock on a summer evening, a certain Ysabeau, doctor to the convent, accompanied by a nun named Sister Louise, smuggled a very powerful, heavy-looking man, dressed as a pedler, into a cell of the Convent of the Saintes-Claires at Gien. There, in the presence of the nun and the doctor, Mirabeau and Sophie met for the last time. They turned upon each other at once with bitter recriminations. Mira-

THE MARQUIS DE MIRABEAU.

MIRABEAU'S FATHER.

From a Print in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

beau reproached Sophie sharply with her conduct with the priests (which had indeed made not a little scandal in the convent). Then there is that M. de Rancourt, whose acquaintance you declined to forego at my bidding! While Sophie, on her part, angrily recalled those " aerial nymphs and beauties " who had turned out to be all too substantial.

The truth was that these people had come to the end of their passion. This was no lovers' quarrel which is the renewal of love, but the *dégout* given by satiety, from which there is no return. They were both false, and weary. Their child was dead, and the tenderness her death had revived was dead too. Sophie had been generous, and Mirabeau, as will be seen, was not wholly selfish. But they were tired, both of them. It is said that Mirabeau remained hidden almost a week, in or near Sophie's cell. An hour or a week could make no difference. The end was come. When he had gone away—morose and deeply brooding—poor Sophie, said Ysabeau, who himself told the story to Lucas de Montigny, sobbed herself into a fever and ophthalmia. But " all yielded to care and time." The two corresponded a little more, but the correspondence soon flickered and faded away. The neighbourhood of Gien had a very pleasant, sociable, aristocratic society, and Sophie's story and frailty would not exclude her from it in the least. She was now only twenty-seven, and still lovely and coquettish. For her, there were new hearts to conquer; and for Mirabeau, new worlds.

CHAPTER X

THE LAWSUIT AT PONTARLIER AND THE "LETTRES DE CACHET"

GABRIEL-HONORÉ had come out of Vincennes as some great beast of the forest might come out of a cage he had paced ceaselessly and angrily for nearly four years.

With all his long-imprisoned energies and passions aflame, with his great faculties unleashed, "tormented by my own activity," he now found himself settled at dead-alive Bignon for an eight months' *tête-à-tête* with his father, expected to walk, read, and play lotto with that exceedingly difficult parent, to sing and play to him in the evenings, to be always neat and punctual at meals, and to listen meekly and perpetually to the Marquis's advice, lectures, and moralities. Madame de Pailly was in Switzerland; and the du Saillants only came occasionally from Paris. The situation would have been impossible if, through all, and in spite of all, this eccentric pair had not managed to love and admire each other. Now, too, one common insistent desire united them —that Gabriel might be reconciled with his wife.

It will be remembered that the sentence which the Criminal Court of Pontarlier had pronounced against

Mirabeau and Madame de Monnier in 1777 was to take effect in five years' time, unless before that period Mirabeau had "purged his contumacy"—that is, presented himself before the court for the case to be heard afresh. In May, 1782, the five years would be over. No wonder that in the last months of 1781 the little household at Bignon was considering very seriously what to do next.

The old Marquis at first bethought him of getting, through his private influence at Court, what were called Letters of Abolition—that is, a special royal act, which simply wiped out a trial and verdict as if they had never existed. But though, as the Marquis said, "all the authorities were butter, and the influences brass," this plan would not work, because, as the Letters of Abolition would only absolve Mirabeau and not Madame de Monnier, he absolutely refused to have anything to do with them. Only the one course remained, then—and that was to constitute himself a prisoner at Pontarlier, and to plead his cause afresh.

On February 2, 1782, Gabriel-Honoré parted affectionately from his father, and left accompanied by a servant, Legrain, and his counsel, des Birons, Procureur du Roi.

Legrain was a native of Picardy, whom the Marquis had engaged for his son in Paris a few months earlier, and whom he declared to have "the aspect of an angel and the patience of a drudge." In the sequel the "drudge-angel," however, turned out to be merely a good-natured fellow, not at all above pilfering and drinking.

As for des Birons, he started as Mirabeau's ad-

viser. How soon was it that the counsel became merely a secretary and amanuensis, and the client, leader and pleader, the ruler of men and his destiny, as he was meant to be?

On February 12th, Mirabeau gave himself up to the authorities at Pontarlier, and began his voluntary three months' captivity in the filthy, crowded, and infected prison, situated just over the council chamber where the judges were deliberating on his fate.

His first examination took place on the very day of his arrival. As a result of it, the court granted him provisory freedom. This was immediately appealed against by Samborde, the magistrate in the case.

Then Mirabeau published a Memoir proving, or seeking to prove, his innocence on every count on which he had been condemned.

On February 21st, he was examined for ten hours. "What is most difficult to give any idea of," says Loménie, "is his arrogance before his judges."

Case? He had no case. His salvation must lie wholly in his wit and audacity. To the accusation of rape, he answered there was no rape because Madame de Monnier had come willingly—more than willingly he might have proved by her letters, if he had been mean enough to produce them. Accused of adultery, "Pure romance," says the prisoner scornfully. "The witnesses to my relations with Madame de Monnier at Verrières were in the pay of her husband; as to the witnesses to my relations with her over the frontier, a French court cannot take cognisance of things happening in a foreign country, so I shall not reply to any question which has

as its object things taking place out of the kingdom." Therefore, since " the accusation of rape cannot exist, and that of adultery cannot be proved . . . there is nothing against me." *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

Haughty and contemptuous, before that day was done the accused had become the accuser, and the judges, baffled and bewildered, found themselves arraigned before their prisoner on a charge of the irregularity of the legal proceedings on which he was being tried. As for the two witnesses who appeared in court against him, " Thank God," he wrote to Caroline du Saillant, " I have made them pay for it."

A little later he produced a second Memoir, in which he pulverised these witnesses to still finer powder, and elaborately explained the reason of his evasion from Joux.

In May, prisoner and case were removed to Besançon, to be re-tried there by the Chamber of La Tournelle of the Besançon Parlement.

At the end of the month Mirabeau produced a third Memoir, in which, true to his principle of accusing some one else when he could no longer excuse himself, he attacked Samborde, the magistrate, as a suborner of witnesses, and as being within the prohibited degrees of kinship to M. de Monnier, the defendant, and so unfit to act in the case.

But this time the judges were not to be distracted into by-paths, and perceived that their man tried to intimidate them. The Chamber of La Tournelle refused to allow him provisory freedom. Soon after this declaration du Saillant arrived at Besançon in his customary rôle of the Marquis's emissary, and with a view to effecting a compromise.

If his father had first approved of Gabriel's doings, the approval was as short-lived as usual. He had bidden his son keep the case quiet, and assume a "meek and conciliatory" (!) attitude towards his judges; and in full defiance of the paternal commands, Gabriel had written the Memoirs, and sent them to his friends in Paris, defied and browbeaten the court, and at least connived at Legrain whipping one of the counsel for the prosecution with his hunting-crop in the Place at Pontarlier. But the real reason for the Marquis's wrath did not lie in his son's unruliness. Madame de Pailly had come back—repenting, perhaps, her good nature in helping Gabriel out of Vincennes—certainly repenting having left father and son together those eight months at Bignon to become friendly and kind.

Mirabeau was not wrong in hearing in his father's anger "the voice of the harpy whose wicked tongue ruins everything." Nor was it extraordinary that he should not be eager to accept a messenger and advice in July from a parent who in June had dubbed him "a fire-ship, a fagot, a fuse, a shadow, a fool, a scandal—wind, smoke, nothing."

Du Saillant's errand was to suggest what Mirabeau, to his honour, had declined to ask—a favourable decision for himself on condition that Madame de Monnier should forfeit the privileges promised to her on her marriage. Gabriel ached for freedom—eight months out of Vincennes, and now in a noisome prison again!—and he had ceased to love Sophie. But he had not ceased to pity her or to be generous to her, and he declared now that the sight of the scaffold in front of his window would not make him

agree to such conditions. Nor did he consent to a compromise until, as he said thereafter, he had "dictated the law" to his judges. "I came to terms? Yes! But when my enemies asked mercy!"

On August 14, 1782, the verdict was delivered. It completely annulled the Pontarlier sentence of 1777, on condition that Madame de Monnier remained in the convent at Gien until the death of her husband, and that she should forego her marriage settlement. On the other hand, the Marquis de Monnier was to give up all claim on her *dot,* and to provide for her a pension of 1200 livres after his death.

Well! Mirabeau's head was "put back on his shoulders," as his father phrased it. But he was still deeply in debt. The whole cost of the lawsuit he must bear himself. Then too he had enraged the father, whose invariable birch-rod was a *lettre de cachet.* On the whole it was wiser and safer just to step over the frontier, where *lettres de cachet* had no effect. Mirabeau went to Neufchâtel.

In this autumn, published by the famous printing-house of Fauche (it had already produced *The Essay on Despotism*), and under the immediate superintendence of the author, there appeared the most personal and one of the most remarkable of all Mirabeau's works, *On Lettres de Cachet and State Prisons* (*Des Lettres de Cachet et des Prisons d'État*).

Written during the year 1777 in Vincennes, without books of reference (for he was not permitted to belong to a library until January, 1778), without any communication with the outer world save with one very illiterate girl, during a practically solitary con-

finement, and with scarcely even a note to help him, Mirabeau had to depend on his extraordinary memory and that "prodigious erudition" which he had acquired without master or teacher, in the midst of one of the most wandering and tempestuous of human lives. In style loud, strong, and boastful—here and there rough and ugly even, but always with that compelling ugliness which, like his own "seamed and carbuncled face," insisted on attention and interest —greatly daring, imperative, defiant—this is the manner of the *Lettres de Cachet.*

In its matter, it attacked the crying scandal of Europe, and the grossest abuse even of the old *régime.*

Lettres de cachet were simply arbitrary warrants for imprisonment, sealed with the King's little seal, and condemning the unfortunate on whom the royal displeasure (or the displeasure of royalty's favourites and mistress) chanced to fall to imprisonment, without any trial and for any length of time. Sometimes the victim was merely imprisoned to save him from a worse fate. Sometimes he lay rotting for years in a dungeon where passing spite had placed him, entirely forgotten by everybody, even his enemy. Ministers obtained from his Majesty bundles of *lettres de cachet,* with the space for the offender's name left blank. The mistress of the Duc de la Vrillière used to sell such letters for twenty-five louis apiece. The lavish nature of the supply granted to the Marquis de Mirabeau himself has been seen. Who, then, in all the world so well qualified to write on the subject as his son? Libraries and documents? This author did not need them. The tyranny he

wrote to expose, he had himself suffered from childhood. The misery of the unhappy beings he sought to relieve, he too had fully borne. Nay, as he wrote, he believed himself to be dying from the effect of such a punishment, and, sick, soul and body, wrote on that others might not so die.

"Deprived of everything . . . except time and feeling," he says in the introduction, "I could not have more drawbacks. But, free or not, I will claim to my last breath the rights of humankind. What moment more fit to fight despotism than when one groans under its chains?" Or, again, "If I move the authorities to pity those unfortunates, whose sorrows I have shared so long, the remembrance of them will be less bitter to me." Throughout the book—declamatory and florid as it very often is—the real feeling, the keen sympathy, the kindliness of the writer's inmost nature still wins the heart, though the cruel wrong Mirabeau tried to right has long since become only a stained page of history. He said of his *Lettres de Cachet,* "qu'il ne mourra point," and, indeed, the abuse itself died first.

The appearance of the work in France had the usual sequel of such writings. The publisher was imprisoned, and his printing-press was sealed. As for the author's father, he danced with rage, almost literally, at the publication "of an outrageous and seditious folly" against an arrangement he had personally found invaluable.

All things considered, it was better for Mirabeau to remain in Neufchâtel. He was there nearly three months. During that time he made the acquaintance of two men who were thereafter to influence

his fate—Clavière, the Genevan banker, who inspired the financial brochures by which Mirabeau introduced himself to the French Revolution, and Duroveray, once Procureur-General of the Genevan Republic, of whose homely and serviceable talents Mirabeau's impatient genius was to make brilliant use in the National Assembly.

Both men belonged to the Genevan Democratic Party, and were exiled by a revolution in their little Republic. Mirabeau hotly took up the questions of Geneva's rights and wrongs, and by October, 1782, had written a vigorous Memoir justifying the democratic movement.

But, *Lettres de Cachet* notwithstanding—and Madame de Pailly notwithstanding, too—the Marquis de Mirabeau wanted his son home, to be reconciled with his wife, and to continue his noble race. The Bailli must have him at the Château of Mirabeau! The Bailli was exceedingly reluctant. But he knew his place and his duty.

On October 19, 1782, "M. Honoré," as his uncle called him, arrived from Neufchâtel at the castle, which he had never visited since his honeymoon in the summer of 1772. "My uncle tried to receive me tepidly, and has not succeeded," Mirabeau wrote to Madame du Saillant. That put the return in a nutshell. For all his resolutions, the honest Bailli could not for the life of him prevent his heart from warming to this sinner whom none could know and hate. He gave him money to settle his most pressing creditors, and soon came to attribute all his misdoings to his father's harshness, prompted by "that serpent who hisses against all the family." Over

"M. Honoré" the brothers had their first and last quarrel in their forty years' friendship: and then the Marquis had to forgive and apologise because the Bailli *must* help to unite Mirabeau to his wife.

The annulling of the Pontarlier sentence had altered Mirabeau's position with regard to her. The Marquis, indeed, was particularly anxious that the pair should make up their differences in private, and not bring them before a court of law, for while Gabriel was in Vincennes, his father had written the most abusive letters about him to M. de Marignane and to Émilie: and, given a lawsuit, such letters might be produced.

On the other hand, Gabriel was no longer minded to approach Madame de Mirabeau as an unpardoned criminal, a suppliant begging her forgiveness, hat in hand. No, no! This time he will be the husband demanding a restitution of conjugal rights from a wife at least as faulty as himself.

But, since 1775—that is for seven years—Émilie had been living with her father in his sumptuous hotel in the Rue Mazarine at Aix, rich, free, and thoroughly enjoying herself. The only link that bound her to Mirabeau had snapped when little Victor died.

Why, under the circumstances, *should* she receive favourably the overtures of her faithless, impoverished, autocratic husband? To be sure, a lawsuit might be awkward—remembering that affair with Gassaud. But still, she would probably win it and continue her present life; whereas, by a tame reconciliation she had nothing to gain—and everything to lose.

When, therefore, on October 22d, three days after his return to neighbouring Mirabeau, Gabriel-Honoré addressed to her a dignified proposal of friendship, she replied, to the Bailli, that her father was resolved never to live with Mirabeau, and that she was resolved never to leave her father, so reunion was impossible.

A month later Mirabeau wrote to her again, a letter in which he appealed to her honour and interests, and barefacedly denied his connection with Sophie!

After this there was a silence of six weeks. On January 1, 1783, Mirabeau and the Bailli were staying in Aix. Mirabeau wrote and wished his wife and father-in-law a happy new year! No reply. Then the Bailli saw the pair in a fruitless interview of mutual recrimination. Mirabeau begged himself to be accorded an interview. His wife answered that it would be "useless and impossible." Undaunted, he presented himself at the Marignanes' house. The Swiss porter, especially engaged to tackle this immense dare-devil of a husband, replies, "Madame is out."

"My compliments to her, and tell her I shall be passing again."

A letter he sent her was returned to him, unopened.

Then he went to the legal authorities of Aix, and demanded that in three days Madame should return to him to live with him as his wife. She formally refused, and demanded a *séparation de corps.*

On March 3d, the Bailli wrote to the Marquis, "Gabriel has presented his request, and the dance begins."

CHAPTER XI

THE LAWSUIT AT AIX-EN-PROVENCE

To try a case in the *locale* where the events which produced it took place, and where party feeling for plantiff and defendant runs high, is now universally admitted to be unjust. It was never more unjust than in Mirabeau's suit against his wife.

In law her cause was bad. Under the jurisprudence of the old *régime,* the husband's unfaithfulness was not a legal plea against him. The capital condemnation, delivered at Pontarlier, had been annulled. The sentence of the Grasse magistrates, after the affair with Villeneuve-Mouans, she could not put forward, as at the time she had warmly taken his part. His pecuniary difficulties had already procured her a *séparation de biens. That* Mirabeau had no objection to see confirmed. The strongest card she held was defamation in letters and memoirs, in which he had roundly abused her. But her own past and character were such that she would scarcely be wise to risk an inquiry into such accusations, while Mirabeau could allege that when they were published he had been absent and abroad.

A feeble case to take into court this.

But in Aix, where it was to be tried, there was a reverse to the medal.

The Marignanes were the richest and best-known people in that proud and wealthy little city. It was filled with their relatives and connections. The Marquis de Marignane was famous for his cook and his suppers. His daughter was the queen of their little society, the leading lady in the theatricals for which it was famous: musical, popular, and devoted to pleasure. The lavish and constant entertainments she gave brought money to the tradespeople and amusement to the upper classes, so that as all Aix profited by the life she was leading, all Aix would naturally be anxious she should continue it for ever. As for M. de Marignane bothering himself about a posterity which would not bear his name—he was indolence personified, and never bothered about anything. After us, the deluge! Furthermore, both he and his daughter were smooth, agreeable, and polished.

Mirabeau belonged, on the other hand, to a family notoriously rough and brusque, who owed money on all sides, and had had for generations a talent for feuds and fights. He declared to Hugh Elliot that, when he arrived in Aix on this occasion, "every one fled from me. I was anti-Christ." The shop-people declared their custom declined directly he came into the city. If his charm had won him adherents—and it had—they were only quite poor people who could help him not at all. In all the neighbourhood he had only two friends of any standing—the Comtesse de Vence, and a young foreigner, Lord Peterborough, who was in Aix throughout the trial. For the rest, his wife's sins were private and his own loud and notorious. He had been separated from her

for nine years. He had been perpetually in prison. He had been a public scandal. Aix had gloated over, and added to, the story of Sophie de Monnier, with that meanness and malice of which only a small and idle society is capable. In its *salons* there were dozens of old women, of both sexes, who could and did recall all the youthful follies this abominable Count had committed—and many, doubtless, he had not. The town contained, too, numbers of persons not averse to seeing the Mirabeau pride and haughtiness, which had often bruised their own vanity, laid low. The man is *mal servi,* even by his own father! And the government naturally looks askance on his seditious *Lettres de Cachet.*

Broken and bankrupt, striding through Aix with that "atrocious frown" on his face deepening into heavier lines day by day, uncouth, unkempt, without influence, without a career—why, however good this man's case at law, our social and monetary advantages can surely crush it and him at a blow! M. de Marignane set on his creditors to harry him, and, said the Bailli, suborned false witnesses against him. Then he engaged, to plead his daughter's cause, practically all the counsel in the place. The famous barristers, Portalis and Siméon—their statues stand outside the Palais de Justice at Aix to-day—were to lead their brethren. For Mirabeau there remained only one defender, a young man called Jaubert, who was then unknown, inexperienced, and but a poor speaker.

When the Marignane counsel were informed that the Comte de Mirabeau proposed to plead the case himself in person, using Jaubert as his assistant only,

they agreed with delighted alacrity. This was but to damn himself the deeper and the quicker! This hurricane of a man, who will fight a creditor with his fists, or beat a noble baron with an umbrella—"All we have to do with *him*," says Portalis, "is to pique him, and he will lose control of himself, and we shall do as we like with him."

But Portalis only knew one side of his enemy's nature. Of the genius which could subdue and use those fiery passions he had no idea.

Mirabeau began, as usual, by writing a Memoir, not only moderate in tone, but flattering and conciliatory towards his wife. He produced some of her tenderest letters to him. The motto of the Memoir was taken from one of them: "God grant that we shall soon meet, for we were not made to live apart."

On March 20, 1783, Gabriel-Honoré, Comte de Mirabeau, being now thirty-four years old, made his first public appearance as pleader and orator. (The Pontarlier case had been tried privately, not in open court.) This case was to be judged by the Sénéchaussée of Aix, with Audier, the lieutenant-general, at its head. The building was packed. Three parts at least of the audience was hostile to the Count. Among it were M. de Marignane himself and the Bailli. Then Mirabeau rose. His speech was but the soft and quiet prelude to mightier things. It had been written beforehand, and was the result of two mornings' work. Dignified, touching, restrained, respectful towards the wife he sought to reclaim, and modest with regard to himself, half the hearers, including, it is said, M. de Marignane, were in tears

before he had finished. He ended with a famous peroration of Bossuet's, which he had borrowed, without acknowledgment, from that divine's *Discourse on the Profession of Mademoiselle de la Vallière.* Instead of the noisy, angry, and bombastic person Portalis had expected, this speaker's attitude had only the calm self-confidence of conscious strength. When he had done, that audience of his foes followed him to his carriage, with applause: and the counsel of Madame de Mirabeau met in solemn conclave.

At the next assembly of the court, Portalis had the wit to take his adversary's tone of moderation: and the adversary replied to him moderately.

On March 24th, sentence was delivered, giving Mirabeau a writ ordering his wife to join him in three days' time, to live under his roof, or else to go to a convent where he could visit her. Her counsel immediately appealed to the Parlement, or higher court, of Aix against this decision of its lower court, and also immediately published in a Memoir, drawn up by Portalis, and entitled *Memoir of Consultation for the Comtesse de Mirabeau,* those letters, exceedingly abusive of his son and complimentary to his daughter-in-law, which the Marquis de Mirabeau had written to M. de Marignane.

This was indeed a bomb burst in Mirabeau's camp. The letters contained some of his father's choicest phraseology respecting his son—and it is known what a master of epithets the old Marquis could be. As for Portalis's comments, they have been "vomited by hell," said the Bailli, "a tissue of lies and calumnies, written to defame," and with a violence unworthy of the able *avocat* who had already played

a distinguished part in the famous case of Beaumarchais *versus* the Comte de la Blache.

Then Mirabeau looked up, as it were, with a flash in his eyes. But he replied, still temperately, at enormous length, in a fat pamphlet entitled *Observations on a Defamatory Libel,* wherein he blamed, not his wife, but her advisers, and excused his father as " one whose anger is always expressed in unmeasured language, and who is nourished on hyperbole."

By now Mirabeau's private circumstances had gone from bad to worse. He was so absolutely without ready money that the poor Bailli had to pawn his diamond cross of the Order of Malta, lest his nephew should be imprisoned for debt—a contingency the Marignanes were doing their best to bring about. The young barristers of the Parlement of Aix used to hustle and jostle this interloper into their profession when he came into the cafés of the town. With what a burning scorn he must have looked at them under those fierce bushy eyebrows, holding in his rage, and biding his time!

Towards the end of May the case opened before the Parlement, a president, nine judges, and councillors, who, said Mirabeau in an anonymous pamphlet in which he gives his own version of the trial —" were accustomed to find the best company and hospitality " at the house of M. de Marignane. Portalis opened the case with dramatic violence, and painted the plaintiff's past, not black, but in the devil's own colour, scarlet. He spoke for two days.

On May 24th, at a quarter to eight in the morning, Mirabeau rose to answer him. The court was crammed literally from the floor to the ceiling. The

crowd had burst past guards, doors, and barriers, and climbed to the very roof, that it might see, if not hear. Marie Antoinette's brother, the Archduke Ferdinand, and his wife were among the audience; young Lord Peterborough, who adored Mirabeau; all fashionable Aix, who hated him; humbler Aix, who were begging to love him, and noble Marignane friends and connections without number. Every eye was fixed on the new pleader, without his wild hair, piercing eyes, and heavy, powerful frame.

He began calmly. But as he proceeded, the deep waters of his passion rose and swelled, and then with one mighty rush swept away the barriers of prudence and reserve. "Stung," says Lucas de Montigny, "by the calumnies of his enemies," he flung to them that letter his wife had written at his bidding to Gassaud in May, 1774, wherein she explicitly owned her faithlessness to her husband. He finished with a thundering apostrophe, in which he accused her father of having misled her, and of being the real author of the present suit. "Martial has described him for me. He is a merchant of lies, of libels, and of abuse." Then a brief peroration, and then, with that air, sombre and imperious, which struck fear into men's hearts, he had done.

The consternation among his foes can be imagined. Portalis left the court, ill, mind and body. As for the Comtesse de Mirabeau, her character was gone. Suspicions her friends might have had. But what are suspicions? When one *knows*, then, indeed, even the public opinion of these lax times forces one to draw back one's silken skirts and raise a scornful eyebrow. She was damned—before the great world,

as represented by the Archduke, which mattered something; and before her own little world, which mattered everything. In her terror, she entered into negotiations of peace with the husband who had brought this plight upon her. But they came to nothing.

Mirabeau himself soon found, if he had not always known, that though he had played a strong card, it had been from an ill-chosen suit. He had himself erected a barrier to reunion. Portalis, with recovered health and wits, was not slow to take the advantage thus given him. "The case is altered. The husband declares he no longer wants his wife."

It became Mirabeau's turn to show that, after all, he *did* want her. *He* now proposed to *her* terms of peace, which she refused until June 16th. The next day the court was to meet again; and in horror of hearing her character further defamed before the Archduke and her world, she sent a message that morning to her husband saying that if he would justify her in public, she would agree to return to him after two years at a convent.

To give up a speech he had carefully prepared and to improvise another, was not now, or ever, to this pleader's taste. To eat his words was much less to his proud liking. He did not eat them. On June 17th, he denied that the letter to Gassaud was written under compulsion, as Madame's counsel had suggested, and that it contained only a frightened lie. But with great audacity he added that the injurious interpretation put upon it came from his wife's defenders; that he had on his side "a sin pardoned and a secret kept"; and that that secret was only torn

from him by the position in which Madame had placed herself. Then he ended by an appeal to her feelings, and left his audience, and, it is said, himself, greatly moved.

But, after all, there had been no retractation. Émilie was furious, and took back her provisional agreement to go into a convent. The *avocat-général* summed up entirely in her favour. On July 5th it was decreed that she was to stay under her father's protection, and that a separation of body and goods was to continue until further orders. True, this verdict was won by the barest majority, and only won at all because one of the judges went over to Madame's side "solely to avoid the scandal of a division." The *avocat-général* was hissed as he came out of court.

Mirabeau, indeed, had "lost his suit: but he had gained his end." Welschinger says that he had "astonished and moved France." He was no longer a local firebrand, consuming a patch in a province. His fame began to go out into other lands. His portrait was sold everywhere. "All France was listening to him": and France, who, in her sore need, most sorely needed a Mirabeau, having taken cognisance of him, did not forget. The Bailli spoke of him as the idol of the countryside. His father said it was incredible how the wretch had got hold of the people.

When he came back to Aix, six years later, it could be truly said that this lawsuit served as a stepping-stone to his public career.

But this was now only in a visionary future.

Beaten and baffled, but still excessively pugnacious, what must M. Honoré do the very same even-

ing the verdict is delivered, but call out that Comte de Galliffet who was his wife's lover, and who had also been very offensively and openly her partisan throughout the progress of the suit? True, the affair fizzled out into nothing more terrible than a sword-thrust in Galliffet's arm. True, too, on the other hand, that Portalis's advocacy "did not leave any feeling of irritation" in Mirabeau's large and generous heart, and that he never afterwards spoke of him but with praise. Still, the verdict Portalis had won left so much wrath and foolhardiness in the loser, that what must he do, on September 9th, but leave Aix for Paris, that he may appeal against the decision at the Council of State at Versailles?

By now, the Bailli was declaring that he had thrown away six months of time, peace, and health, as well as twenty thousand francs, for his nephew's cause, and that he was weary of the whole affair. As for the Marquis, he fell into one of his royal rages with this litigious boy, who had never been anything but a curse and a torment from the first. He must look henceforth to Tonneau—and Tonneau only—for that posterity on which his heart was set. I decline to have Gabriel-Honoré in the house! I wash my hands of him! I solemnly and formally abandon to the King's ministers the right they gave me over his movements and his dwelling-place when he came out of Vincennes. "My part towards him is done." For five years father and son had no direct communication.

Gabriel went to Versailles, to plead irregular procedure in the conduct of the case at Aix. There was

nothing of the suppliant in his attitude. He treated the ministers, and particularly Miromênil, the Keeper of the Seals, with a kind of haughty contempt, far from ingratiating.

Early in 1784, he printed and spread abroad a Memoir on the same lines, but far more violent than his Memoirs written at Aix, and containing the now famous letter to Gassaud. M. de Marignane was sufficiently alarmed by these proceedings to come up to Paris, with his daughter, that they might defend themselves if need be. Émilie had the singularly bad taste to call at her father-in-law's hôtel. "My enemy has no right to enter my house," was the spirited message he sent her.

With that, Mirabeau's marriage may be said to have ended. His wife soon resumed her former life at Aix with her father; and found the usual fate of the pleasure-seeker—that pleasures cease to please. The curtain had been rung down on the vexed comedy of a most ill-assorted union. If, said the father who was never too favourable to him, Mirabeau had had a wife "merely sensible and unspoilt, she could have done what she liked with him."

But, say the Loménie who are consistently unfavourable, this woman "only came into his life to wound what was best in him, to precipitate his disorders, and to abandon him in misfortune." No character, perhaps, was ever more susceptible to the influences of the natural affections than was the great tribune's. But, to his bitter loss, such affections, pure, true, and quiet, he hardly ever knew. Who shall not pity him? His wife was only like many another woman, who, offered a great and difficult

destiny, chooses an agreeable and easy one, and lost herself and her influence over her husband, not because she was bad, but because she was vain and weak.

CHAPTER XII

MADAME DE NEHRA

In the beginning of 1784, Mirabeau, living in Paris in a condition which is best described as extravagant poverty, formed one of his stormy and ephemeral attachments to a certain noble Marquise. My lady, who would fain conduct her irregularities decently and in order, bethought her of a poor, pretty girl-friend of hers who had rooms at a convent, and who, at those rooms, could perhaps receive the Marquise and her people and, further, chaperone her meetings with her lover! Mademoiselle declined to entertain this plan. When she first saw Mirabeau, on the day of that refusal, he was still trying to swallow his rage at it. In her own words, she " drew back horrified " at the sight of his angry hideousness. Though he employed upon her all the arts of his tongue, ay, and all the seductions of his nature, he could only obtain her consent to go and stay awhile with the Marquise in an *hôtel garni.*

Henriette de Nehra was at this time just nineteen years old. She had been born in Holland, and was the natural daughter of William van Haren (sometime Ambassador of the Low Countries in Brussels) and of an obscure Frenchwoman. While he was in

Amsterdam with Sophie de Monnier, Mirabeau had met and liked both van Haren and his brother. By the time Henriette was fourteen, her father and uncle were dead. She came to Paris, where she lived on a very, very modest little fortune, in rooms in a convent, calling herself by the name of de Nehra, an anagram on the van Haren to which she had no legal right.

When Mirabeau first saw her she was a very lovely girl, tall, delicate, and slender, with quantities of fair hair, an exquisite complexion, and the soft blue eyes of the North. Reserved in character, very gentle and serene in manner, calm, firm, and equable—here for Mirabeau certainly was the attraction of opposites. He came daily to the *hôtel garni* to see his Marquise. There, always by the side of that artificial *grande dame* he found Henriette, grave, sweet, and attentive. They soon came to talk something better than *colifichets,* though Mirabeau could shed on those, too, the magic of his mind and wit. One listener was as intelligent as she was modest. It was not long—it could not have been long—before he was pouring out to her, and to her only, the rich stream of his knowledge, his splendid and sweeping torrent of idea, while his Marquise sat by—frowning, jealous, and forgotten. To quarrel with him was of course the next scene in her drama—it was always so easy to quarrel with Mirabeau! To make mad, violent, and devoted love to Henriette was naturally the next step in his own.

Macaulay has said that Mirabeau "might have boasted with Wilkes that with a quarter of an hour's start he could have beaten the handsomest man in

London." Yet it was far from being his fascination which won Henriette de Nehra. It was not even that he kept, as Dumont says, "through all his disorders I know not what of elevation and dignity." It was certainly not his *passion brûlante* for her, at which she stood, as she might well stand, in some sort aghast. Bankrupt and beaten, of ill-repute among all men, cast off by his father, disdained by his wife, shabby and despised—these, to her, were the inducements to care for him. The greatness of his need was his appeal to her, and she loved him without ever being in love with him.

As for him, he put his soul and his life at her feet. "I swear to you in all the sincerity of my heart," he wrote to Chamfort, "I am not worthy of her . . . she is a different order of being." He had met at last the woman he could respect. He spoke of her often as his best and only friend. He wrote to her in the language of honour and dignity. He adored, as a sinner might adore in a saint, "her angel face, the gentleness that surrounds and fills her." To speculate upon the might have been is always vain. Yet who can help the wonder as to what Fate might have made of Mirabeau if she had given him Henriette de Nehra to be the wife and the influence of his youth?

After the inevitable break with her friend the Marquise, Henriette returned to the convent. For three months Mirabeau came to visit her there every day—sometimes spending four or five hours together, imploring, bewitching, worshipping her, at her *grille*.

All the while he had on hand that Memoir of his, and a battle-royal with the authorities at Versailles.

"He lost precious time," says Henriette. Lost! it was the world well lost—"le temps le mieux employé est celui qu'on perd."

One day—Madame de Nehra wrote their story herself after Mirabeau's death—he came to her, saying that the urgency of the business connected with his Memoir and his quarrel with Miroménil made it necessary he should leave France for Holland at once. "If you have any friendship for me you will come with me!"

"He implored me so passionately that his prayers overcame me. . . . I went, and have never repented it."

How far any woman can be called virtuous who is content to forego her reputation for that chastity which is called Virtue, as if in itself it summed up and comprised all the virtues, is indeed a vast and a difficult question. But it does seem in the case of Henriette de Nehra that her sin in uniting her fate to Mirabeau's was her only sin. Until she met him her life had been without reproach. She broke no tie or vow to join him, as Sophie de Monnier had done. The religion she saw all round her seldom prevented such errors as hers, though it often served as a cloak to hide them. Brought up as she had been, conventions had no weight with her. The motives at least for her deed were not base. She could serve and save him, it might be, from the fatal consequences of his own madness. She *did* act upon him, as she said herself, as "a great bridle." She came to him when he was poor and despised, and left him when he was rich and famous.

Gilbert Elliot, the good and honest Scotchman,

knowing all her history, wrote of her as "a modest, gentle, and virtuous woman." "Filled with modesty and grace . . . made to me an ornament to virtue," Étienne Dumont describes her. An Englishman, following her life, declares that it is "difficult to help feeling admiration for her." Not merely difficult, surely, but when one knows her further and closer than he did, impossible.

In May, 1784, she and Mirabeau left Paris together, stopping first at Brussels, and then at Maestricht where the Memoir, with something very like a libel on Miroménil added to it, was printed. That they were abundantly content, though pressing poverty already harried them, is on the testimony of them both. "I have been happy only one day in my life," Mirabeau wrote to her, . . . "that when you gave me your friendship." Throughout this journey, they *were* friends only. It was not until they returned to Paris their relationship assumed a deeper intimacy. Henriette successfully smuggled into Paris copies of that forbidden Memoir, by an ingenious feminine ruse which raised Mirabeau into the seventh heaven of a quite boyish delight.

Without the slightest prospect of being able to pay for it, he had actually taken, in this spring of 1784, a handsome house in Paris where he lived with fine furniture, horses, carriages, and servants—upon credit.

Henriette's first measure was to persuade him to move (which they did on June 22d) into a much more modest residence in the Rue de la Roquette. The carriages, horses, and servants were put down. With the help of a single maid, Henriette managed their

new little home in modest comfort. Directly Mirabeau had any money, he gave it to her. He had not the slightest idea how to keep accounts—and had very seldom tried. If he changed even a louis, he told her. Sometimes, indeed, he would rush out, and impetuously order her magnificent presents for which she had not the slightest use. Lest she should scold him because they were dear, he used to pretend they had been cheap; but as she always went and paid for them afterwards herself, his little deception was soon discovered. When he brought her jewels she would wear them two or three times to please him and then arrange with the jeweller to take them back. "If it was a hat or bonnet, the evil was without remedy, and I had not the heart to reproach him." Her own tastes were as frugal and simple as her love for him was calm, serious, and sincere. If he ever knew real contentment, it was surely during these two and a half months' quiet life in Paris. He used to write hard all the morning, dine with Henriette, and sup with friends. When he returned home he found always, serene and gentle, the woman who, whatever her fault, must yet be called the one good influence of his life.

They had a little dog in their *ménage* at this time whom they were both "weak enough" to love—too well. It died. "One has wept for it and been ashamed of having wept," Mirabeau wrote to Chamfort. ". . . As for me, I am very tolerant of this weakness—for the little creature was very fond of *mon amie,* and everything which attaches itself makes one attached to it: a strong reason, it seems to me, for a sensible man not to have too much to do with

animals." Here, for a moment, is a glimpse of another, but a not less real Mirabeau than the fighting deputy of the tribune and the mad sensualist of Vincennes.

But his destiny could not leave him long to Henriette's calm influence. He had lost his suit—his appeal against the decision of the Grand Chamber of Aix. To be sure, that was not surprising. He had been occupied with Henriette, and had neglected it. But one day, towards the end of August, he heard that Miroménil, to avenge the libel and the Memoir, had obtained for him a *lettre de cachet*. That instantly decided him. In twenty-four hours he and Henriette were on their way to England.

England was a natural choice. It was the land of the free. Mirabeau had what he spoke of as a "long passion" for our country. Great Britain was the *patrie* of at least three of his intimate personal friends, the Elliots and Lord Peterborough. Hugh Elliot, recognising in the warmth and vigour of the work *On Lettres de Cachet* the style and character of his old schoolfellow, had even, after the decision of the courts of Aix, offered him a shelter in England and the means of embracing there a diplomatic career. Then, too, England had been the hospitable hostess of nearly all Mirabeau's great predecessors in French literature—of Prévost, of Montesquieu, of Voltaire, of Helvétius, of Holbach, of Buffon, and of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Further, she was at the moment both socially and politically singularly interesting, with Pitt, the younger, almost at the summit of his amazing career, with Burke in full oratory, and Fox and Sheridan at the height of their brilliant

powers. Lastly, England had a reputation for generosity and fairness, be the stranger within her borders who he might, and of a ready ear as well as an open hand—and Mirabeau proposed to earn his bread by writing.

Being Mirabeau, and perfectly impecunious, he of course insisted, when he arrived at Dieppe and discovered that the packet-boat to Shoreham only went twice a week, on chartering a private vessel. Then it really seemed necessary, as the magnificent Prince of Wales had filled "Brighthelmstone" to overflowing, and there was not a seat left in the stage-coach from there to London, to take a post-chaise; so that, although Henriette *was* "the marshal-general of the caravan," the journey cost three times as much as it ought.

When they arrived in the capital at the end of August, Mirabeau *would* engage the most expensive, pleasant rooms overlooking St. James's Park, on the principle, perhaps, that one may as well owe for an agreeable as for a disagreeable lodging. Henriette could not speak a word of English. Mirabeau, to be sure, had learnt the language at school, and if he could not speak it fluently, could certainly read it and understand it. But to earn money, as was necessary—English money from English-speaking men—and that at once, was not so easy. Mirabeau turned immediately to pen and ink.

On September 28th, he produced a pamphlet *On the Order of Cincinnatus* (*Considérations sur l'Ordre de Cincinnatus*), which hotly attacked an order of knighthood founded, of all places in the world, in democratic America. (The fact that Tonneau was

a knight of this body, and that Tonneau at the moment was in Gabriel-Honoré's place in the paternal house and affections, may have had something to do with the vehemence of the onslaught.)

The pamphlet is memorable as being the first work that Mirabeau published with his name affixed to it. An edition in English appeared simultaneously with the French one. The translation had been made by Romilly, afterwards the famous Sir Samuel Romilly, who has left on record what a very *exigeant* author Mirabeau showed himself—how hotly convinced he was of the beauty and eloquence of his original, and loudly and openly afraid his translator would not do it justice.

That *Cincinnatus* brought in something is very likely. But Mirabeau's first few weeks in England were not the less hampered and blackened by direst poverty. Hugh Elliot was abroad, so, even had he not retracted that offer of a diplomatic post, he could be of no use. Gilbert Elliot was living at Bath. London was at that time full of French journalists of the baser sort, who from the safety of these shores flooded their own country with scurrilous prohibited productions. Mirabeau evolved a wild scheme of teaching these people his father's political economy in a work entitled *The Conservator* (*Le Conservateur*), which was to appear in both French and English, and for which he was to receive a monthly stipend. This unpractical plan of course fell through.

Its originator was soon writing to Chamfort that "A sure way of starving is to set up as a French writer"; and again, very bitterly, "People are much deceived as to English generosity." Then, the au-

tumnal fogs, "so heavy, sombre, and slow to go," began to settle upon London. The ill-cooked national food and the taciturn national manners weighed heavily on the spirits of the hapless pair of immigrants. To crown all, poor Henriette became very ill with alarming fainting fits; and the good London doctors charged a louis a visit, and the cheap ones were so dangerous!

Des Genettes, a young French medical man, came either professionally or as a friend to see Madame de Nehra in St. James's Park one day, and in his record of the visit tells how while he was there a publisher came and left some bank-notes in payment for work Mirabeau had done, and the thankful joy with which she received them. (Mirabeau himself was not present.) Fortune really was growing a little kinder now.

Soon Mirabeau had an order from a Dutch publisher to write a pamphlet on the question of the Dutch monopoly of the mouth of the Scheldt. Was it on the strength of this order that he insisted on moving from the much too expensive rooms in St. James's Park to yet handsomer ones in Portland Place? Des Genettes says that Mirabeau began to hold receptions there "as if he had been an ambassador," which certainly implies that by this time he had a circle of acquaintances. He went presently to a fine City dinner at the Fishmongers' Company. He began to quarrel with his servant Hardi, whom he had brought over from France with him. He was evidently feeling more his usual self again. On December 28, 1784, he published the pamphlet on the Scheldt question, which he had translated from an

English work on the subject by Vaughan, a friend of Romilly's.

The *Doubts on the Liberty of the Scheldt* (*Doutes sur la Liberté de l'Escaut*) always passed and passes as Mirabeau's; and when Pitt adopted and acted on the views expressed in the pamphlet, Mirabeau took the whole compliment to himself.

During the winter he left Henriette in London and went to stay with the Gilbert Elliots at Bath.

CHAPTER XIII

ENGLAND

WHATSOEVER Mirabeau may have been—or may have failed to be—one great testimony to his character remains unshaken—the high opinion his British friends formed and kept of it.

Sir Gilbert Elliot, whose distinguished history is a voucher for his character, as his character is a voucher for the moral value of his judgment, found Mirabeau, when he resumed his acquaintance in England, "one of the ugliest and the most unfortunate dogs in Europe," but, not the less, "an ardent friend and I believe a sincere one." If he is—and he is—the same awkward, overbearing, "perfectly *suffisant*" person we remember at school, he has still the impetuous honesty we knew then! Poor Sir Gilbert and his family suffered dreadfully, as will be seen, from what are most charitably described as the inequalities of Mirabeau's character, and certainly found his turbulent and Bohemian nature wholly alien to their own well-regulated lives and British self-control.

Yet the Comte de la Marck, one of the noblest of Mirabeau's French friends, could write of these British ones as being "very attached to the Count

in life, and faithful to his memory; . . . their letters, written after his death, are full of affection for him. One knows that in general the British are not very demonstrative in their friendships." As for Romilly, who was himself "strict to the verge of Puritanism," his testimony was higher still. True, he had to confess his friend's violent and impetuous disposition and speech, the "disorders of his tumultuous youth," and a broad unscrupulousness in accomplishing his ends. Yet he could still write that those ends were "the noblest end"; that in "his public conduct as well as in his writings he was desirous of doing good; that this ambition was of the noblest kind," and that he stood forth for ever as the "declared enemy and denouncer of every species of tyranny and oppression."

Considering these opinions come from men who could by no possibility have had any private ends to serve in giving them, Mirabeau's French biographers have as a rule heeded them too little.

His descent upon Sir Gilbert's serene and orderly household at Bath in this winter of 1784–85 can only be compared to that of a bull in a china-shop. He was so big and loud and overpowering! Sir Gilbert records how he scared and horrified "my John Bull wife," made boisterous and confident love to his host's pretty sister-in-law, frightened Lady Elliot's little boy with his great caresses, and left the Elliots' friends gaping and astounded. He monopolised his old schoolfellow literally from morning till night: wrote the most delighted, rosy accounts to Henriette of his visit, and told her how Sir Gilbert was making all kinds of plans for his fortune.

He was so convinced that he was not only receiving pleasure, but giving it, that when he was invited to visit the Elliots at Minto, in Scotland, he took the proposal that he should occupy rooms at the gamekeeper's cottage, instead of living with the family, as a compliment, and did not in the least realise that after her experience at Bath poor Lady Elliot had solemnly declared that nothing would induce her to have him under her roof again.

When Mirabeau returned to London, he found himself, partly, at least, through his friendship with the Elliots, more or less a *persona grata* in London society.

One day Romilly met him dining at Mr. Brand Hollis's—in company with General Miranda and John Wilkes—a Wilkes of fifty-eight with his flaming career behind him, almost as clever and quite as seductively ugly as Mirabeau himself. The conversation turned on English criminal law, the severity of its sentences and the publicity of its executions. Wilkes defended the existing methods—with bad arguments, perhaps, but an admirable wit and coolness. Mirabeau, not content with refuting his antagonist, declaimed against his doctrines, passionately and vehemently attacked his morals (!) *en passant,* and would have enjoyed a quarrel with him, only the Englishman was much too cool and wise to fight. " Wilkes-Chatham " Macaulay calls Mirabeau. If he had the bold statesmanship he admired in the one, he had, alas! also the moral looseness he reproved in the other.

Presently—some time during this winter of 1784–85—Mirabeau went to stay with Edmund Burke at

Beaconsfield. The two parted swearing eternal friendship, quite unconscious of the *Reflections on the French Revolution* the one was to write and the "fierce philippic" against it the other was to deliver from the tribune, because the Reflections reflected upon the wisdom and utility of the National Assembly.

Des Genettes met Mirabeau out at dinner one day, loudly laying down the law upon medical matters, of which he knew nothing at all. He seems indeed to have spent a great deal of his time in English society in harangues and controversies. As his expressions *were* excessively expressive and he was exceedingly haughty and positive, his British hosts may have found him the lion of their parties in more senses than one. He himself told Romilly, "Yesterday, I heard Mr. Gibbon talk like one of the most arrant knaves in existence" at Lord Lansdowne's. Unluckily, at this date the historian was in Lausanne, so whom Mirabeau abused in mistake for him has never been ascertained. Did he give this innocent and anonymous gentleman his vigorous opinion of *The Decline and Fall* as an "odiously false picture of the felicity of the Roman Empire," proclaiming its artist no free-born Briton, but a miserable "slave of the Elector of Hanover"?

On January 25, 1785, Mirabeau was present at the opening of Parliament, and saw William Pitt the younger, at six-and-twenty years old, "debating as a master with his rivals the affairs of the world." He also saw there Lady Warren Hastings, much overdressed, which reminded him of a passage in Pliny against the extravagance of the wives of magistrates!

He quoted it to Burke, who used it later in one of his speeches against Hastings.

Among other acquaintance formed in England, it is said that Mirabeau made that of Nelson. Nelson was certainly a friend of Sir Gilbert Elliot's, but, on the other hand, he was in England only a very short time out of Mirabeau's stay there. Mirabeau was also introduced to Hurd, literary man, Court favourite, and Bishop of Worcester, while he knew well Dr. Price, the famous Nonconformist divine. Lord Shelburne, just created Marquis of Lansdowne, and Benjamin Vaughan (the author of the English version of the pamphlet on the Scheldt), were both not only true friends to Mirabeau, but, as will be seen, to Madame de Nehra also.

For the rest, and despite Sir Gilbert's introductions, many of the great Englishmen of the day had no reason for desiring the acquaintance of this rough, needy foreign Count, who, clever as he might be, had up to the present hardly done anything more *éclatant* than get himself constantly put in prison, and who was living upon credit in London lodgings with a woman who was not his wife.

There, in spite of her soothing influence, home life had been far from serene.

The servant, Jacques Philippe Hardi, whom he had brought to England, was soon at loggerheads with his master. Hardi swore he had been engaged as secretary and made to act as a man-of-all-work, that he had been led into taking the situation only by Mirabeau's "infernal wit, which beats everything I ever knew," and by promises of the "wealth of Peru." Mirabeau, on the other hand, denounced Hardi as a

scoundrel, attacked him with his fists, and then laid a formal accusation against him of the theft of "twenty-seven holland shirts, a book, two nightcaps, six pairs of silk stockings, one muslin cravat, two lawn and one linen handkerchiefs."

The case, which sounds ridiculous enough, might have been wholly attributed to the litigious blood in the veins of the Riquetti, but that Sir Gilbert Elliot declared that the prosecution was begun and persevered in by his advice. It appears indeed to have been thought by Mirabeau's English friends that the whole affair was got up by his French enemies, and that Hardi was their tool or their accomplice.

The case was tried at the Old Bailey. (Mirabeau and Henriette had again changed their rooms and were now lodging at Hatton Garden, Holborn.) The judge was Baron Perryn—"an imperturbable British magistrate." One of Mirabeau's counsel was Mr. Fielding, the nephew of the author of *Tom Jones*. Offered, as a Frenchman, a jury composed half of French and half of English, Mirabeau paid us a high compliment by choosing that all twelve jurors should be of our nation. Lord Peterborough was present in court, as he had been at Aix. He heard Mirabeau do now as he had done then—when he was asked an inconvenient question make in reply a long and eloquent speech, in which query and point were soon buried and forgotten.

Mirabeau speaks "of the insolent behaviour of Hardi's counsel who attempted to impugn my veracity": but he declared not the less that all the Englishmen in the case "seemed to vie with each other to show me that justice in this country is al-

ways administered . . . in such a way as to extort approbation from the prisoners themselves."

Hardi was pronounced "Not Guilty." Sir Gilbert Elliot declared, not the less, that he had as full a conviction of Mirabeau's honour as if he had been his brother. Two days later, reports of the trial were being hawked about the London streets—"The full account of the trial of Mounseer Hardy, the principal secretary of a French nobleman, the Count Ricketty Mire-a-bow, who was sent to a dungeon six different times by the King of France, because he said that Frenchmen have no liberty. Hurray! Long live old Ricketty!"

Sir Gilbert Elliot and Romilly published in the *Public Advertiser* "a scrupulously exact" account of the whole affair, lest Mirabeau's enemies should misrepresent and use it against him.

The most remarkable part of the trial was the broad and just spirit in which the haughty loser accepted the unfavourable verdict. "The trial has terminated by the acquittal of Hardi, and I am glad of it," he wrote, . . . "in France he would most likely have been found guilty. Should I ever return there, I shall endeavour to turn this trial to the benefit of my country. We also must have trial by jury and according to English law. . . . I will move heaven and earth when I return to alter our mode of trying criminals."

His *Observations of an English Traveller on the Prison called the Bicêtre,* written in 1788, and translated from a pamphlet of Romilly's, are indeed an *exposé* of the *faults* of the English criminal system. But, "while in England, according to me, there are

only corrections to be made, in France there is everything to be done afresh." The *Observations* put forward the six hundred cases to which capital punishment was applicable in England; proved that many of them needed a mild correctional penalty only; and declared, as Montesquieu had done, that the certainty, not the severity, of punishment is the best deterrent from crime.

The justice, the shrewdness, and the sobriety to recognise and appreciate what was good in us, to see what was bad, and to foresee the best way to make that bad, good, were attributes which Mirabeau possessed as no other of our foreign critics has ever possessed them, and which he applied not only to our criminal system, but to our government and to our natural character. The flattering hyperboles in which Montesquieu and Voltaire adored us are much more gratifying but far less sound and true than Mirabeau's rough, generous strictures. If, in his study of a country so much freer and happier than his own, he was betrayed for a moment into an exaggerated enthusiasm, his statesman's mind was at hand to correct the impulsive heart.

"England! England! But it is a constitution! The English have a fatherland . . . public spirit, civic virtues . . . the first rank among the nations." "A really great and wonderful people." "Nothing perfect can come from man: but there is less wrong, even much less wrong, in England than anywhere else." "The inexhaustible mother of great examples, the classic land of liberty."

Later, Mirabeau told La Marck that France *must* have a representative government as England had—

" it contains every guarantee of judicious liberty." Yet, though he certainly did not regard the House of Lords as " a monument of Gothic superstition," as the Abbé Sieyès did, he protested against the creation of an Upper House in France, and voted against it when the question came before the National Assembly in 1789. France is not England, and what is well for the one might be a deadly error in the other. Then, too, excellent as may be the Englishman's constitution, for himself, his administration is certainly the worst possible! The most cursory acquaintance with the English political history of the latter part of the eighteenth century reveals a jobbery and corruption Mirabeau's mind could never have missed. Voltaire, indeed, seeing the pearls, forgot the mud. Mirabeau saw through the mud to the pearls below it.

It was the same with the national character. The Englishman cannot justify his " ferocious pride," his ignorant contempt of everything un-English. (It is rather amusing to find the vainglorious pen, which had traced an imaginary descent from noble Arrighetti, declaiming against " the absurd pretence to family which is so general in this land.") The critic went on to define us as " a people rough, obstinate, grasping, who yet by the influence of a few good ideas (or a good constitution, though a very incomplete one) is worth more than the most polished nations, because it has civic liberty. That is admirable." The Englishman is " generally a well-informed person," far less agreeable and communicative than a Frenchman, but more to be relied on; " when he is energetic, his energy is calculated reflection."

As for English women, except for their stiffness and reserve, "I have always been devoted to them." "It is impossible to be as beautiful as an English woman without self-command, superiority of mind, and strength of character."

Her lover was delighted that Henriette, with her fair hair and blue eyes, was rarely taken for a foreigner: he was not at all ill-pleased to be told that he himself looked "as much like a Briton as possible."

Perhaps, as a whole, the most just description of his attitude to us both as a nation and a constitution is to say that he admired us but did not love us. It may be conceded that we are, as a general rule, more admirable than lovable.

On March 2, 1785, Madame de Nehra returned to France—in order to smooth the way there for Mirabeau's return. His cry of desolation at being left without her was so loud and poignant, one still hears it and feels for him.

To console him a little, Sir Gilbert Elliot took him over the London hospitals, and Mirabeau wrote a long letter to Romilly on the advisability of their being situated (particularly the Homes for Children) in the country. "Forgive me," he added at the close of a voluble epistle, "but it is pleasant to dream of men's happiness: bad as they are, their wickedness is not, in most cases, their own fault."

Meanwhile, Madame de Nehra, in the teeth of all advice—every one recommended her to think of her own interests and abandon this poor devil of a Mirabeau—had gone to Versailles to plead permission for his return to Paris. Her lovely face and her "exquisite simplicity" had so wrought on the minister

Breteuil, that he persuaded the King (who was "irritated" against the Comte) and the Queen (who was displeased with his pamphlet on the Scheldt) to give their consent to his return.

On April 1, 1785, Gabriel-Honoré left England, which he was never to see again.

To what degree the greatest statesman of the Revolution—the greatest statesman of modern Europe—was influenced by what he saw and learnt, what he owed in his own conduct to the example of the great politicians whom he knew and studied in this country, is naturally impossible to determine exactly. But that England had a large share in forming his political creed and character is certain. It has been seen that he learnt lessons from her system of parliamentary government, and at least took warning by her criminal code.

But, more than that, he not only described himself as "enthusiastic" in the admiration he felt for the talents and virtues of the elder Pitt, the mighty Chatham, but solemnly declared in a letter written from England that, should he ever be called to take part in the liberation of his country, "Chatham shall be my model."

Hazlitt has noted Mirabeau's resemblance to that model "in his commanding tone and personal apostrophe." Macaulay has drawn a long parallel between them. Neither, he says, was "eminently successful in long set speeches." Neither was a close or ready debater. But in those "sudden bursts which seem to be the effect of inspiration; short sentences which come like lightning, dazzling, burning, striking down everything before them; sentences which,

spoken at critical moments, decided the fate of great questions; sentences which at once became proverbs —in these chiefly lay the oratorical power both of Chatham and of Mirabeau."

Lord Brougham speaks of Chatham in words which apply with a literal exactness to Mirabeau—"the firmness of grasp with which he held his advantage was fully equalled by the rapidity of the glance with which he discovered it."

Most curious of all is the picture of Chatham drawn from life by Waldegrave, and for which Mirabeau himself might have sat. "An eye as significant as his words . . . he commands the passions with sovereign authority . . . to inflame a popular assembly is a consummate orator. . . . He has courage of every sort. . . . He is imperious, violent, and implacable; impatient even of the slightest contradiction; and under the mask of patriotism has the despotic spirit of a tyrant." It is only when Waldegrave adds "his private character is irreproachable" that one sees his model was not Mirabeau, but a colder and a purer soul.

That much of this resemblance was entirely natural and unconscious is certain. Genius takes hints, but seldom copies; and this Mirabeau was a genius or nothing.

Yet he owes, surely in some part, to one great Englishman and to his English visit those qualities of deep and marvellous prescience, of unerring soundness of judgment, and of profound and practical understanding of human nature, for which he has been called the most English of the statesmen of his country.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PAMPHLETS ON STOCK-JOBBING AND THE MISSION TO BERLIN

When Mirabeau rejoined Madame de Nehra in Paris in this April of 1785, his financial circumstances were as deplorable as when he had left it. His old debts were still unpaid. He was daily incurring new ones. His father was more obdurate than ever—"uses all his cleverness," said poor Gabriel-Honoré, "to make me die of starvation." Tonneau was still in high favour in the paternal home. Mirabeau was thirty-six and had no trade nor the likelihood of one. What was to be done?

The first thing he *did* do was perfectly characteristic. He took to live with himself and Henriette a little boy of three years old, "Coco," the "fils adoptif" of Carlyle, and the Lucas de Montigny of the *Mémoires de Mirabeau.*

Carlyle has assumed, not unnaturally considering the character of Mirabeau, that this child was really his natural son. The present writer has it on the testimony of M. Gabriel Lucas de Montigny, the grandson of Coco, that this was not the case. Lucas de Montigny was the son of Montigny, the sculptor who is responsible for the bust of Mirabeau now in the

Louvre, and of Edmée-Adélaïde Baignières, his wife.

Before the visit to England, Henriette had begged Mirabeau to take charge of the little creature. Now, when her wish was fulfilled, the household into which he was adopted was so dreadfully poor, that even to Mirabeau's recklessness and imprudence, life in Paris appeared impossible. He decided to take his whole *horde,* as he called them, to the Château of Mirabeau, to live there cheaply, and write a *chef-d'œuvre* which *must* bring in money. Everything was settled. The boxes were actually packed: when Coco was attacked by a sudden and violent illness, which changed the fate of Mirabeau and, perhaps, the fate of France.

During the delay this illness necessitated, Mirabeau renewed his acquaintance with Clavière, the Genevan banker, whom he had met in Neufchâtel. Clavière introduced him to Panchaud, also a Swiss banker, and an exceedingly sharp financier. Panchaud put Mirabeau into relations with Calonne, then Controller-General of Finances, handsome, pleasant, easy, courtly—chronically and horribly in want of money—and just now in especial need of a pen clever enough to dissuade people from investing in the Joint Stock Companies, which were the craze of the hour, and to induce them to patronise the neglected public funds instead.

The financial condition of France during the few years preceding the Revolution has often been dwelt on. The whole structure was rotten. All the Controllers, save only Turgot, went on the system of propping the falling pillars—to last their own time. Mirabeau would be a mighty prop—"the first man

in the world," Panchaud had described him, "to talk of what he knew nothing about." From Mirabeau's own point of view, a few brilliant pamphlets on a great question of the moment should surely force the government to recognise his power and give him a post.

There was no more talk of retiring to the Castle of Mirabeau. Coco was soon better. Mirabeau and Henriette went for a month to Bouillon in Luxemburg.

There, in May, was published Mirabeau's brief and brilliant pamphlet *On the Bank of Discount* (*De la Caisse d'Escompte*), one of the most famous of the stock-jobbing companies. In it the author vehemently insisted that all such companies should be under government control, and then, because he was Mirabeau, and in spite of the fact that he had the most pressing need of Calonne's good will, attacked that government, and called on the King "to see with his own eyes, to judge with his own judgment . . . to take as a motto the truth that to have character is to have enough talent to reign, and to reign as a great and a good king."

The pamphlet became very popular. Volatile Paris soon invented a head-dress, "à la Caisse d'Escompte . . . sans fond comme cette caisse." But the Bank of Discount remained a fashionable investment all the same.

Neither that fact, nor those unfavourable criticisms on the government, prevented the official support and encouragement being given to a bolder and bitterer pamphlet *On the Bank of Spain, commonly called the Bank of St. Charles* (*De la Banque d'Espagne, dite de Saint-Charles*).

Largely drawn from a work on the subject by Clavière himself, Mirabeau may be said to have added nothing but his genius. That was enough. The shares in the Bank of St. Charles dropped with a thud. The pamphlet had been published early in July. On the 17th of that month the authorities, who had commanded it, issued an order for its suppression, the truth being that plausible Calonne, frightened by the storm raised, thought a suppression of the thing the best way to prove he had had nothing to do with it.

Mirabeau turned his angry head and glared at the suppressors. He wrote an enraged letter to a M. de la Noraye, who was chiefly responsible. Why, you fools, you yourselves told me to do it! The enraged letter was also suppressed; and Mirabeau's relations with the government became, not unnaturally, a little strained.

With his attack on the stock-jobbing companies there first comes to the fore that touchstone by which friend and foe alike tests and tries him—his venality.

That in the present instance the government rewarded him by nothing but refunding the expenses of the publication of the pamphlets by the promise of a post, is most likely true, but is not the question. That, both now and hereafter, turns, not on if Mirabeau was paid, but if he was paid for lying or for speaking the truth. In the present instance, if he was a liar, he was the least servile and the most obstreperous of his kind. He attacked his employers with such a resolute outspokenness, that they got him a post at last, much more to be rid of him than to reward him, and, as he said to his father three years

later, would have paid his silence better than his speech.

The pamphlets made him suddenly famous. All Paris began to talk of him. All the world—though not all the world and his wife—began to receive him.

Panchaud, himself a man of wit as well as a man of business, had a little coterie of "courtiers, abbés, and magistrates," whom he was trying to teach the useful art of money-making. At his house Mirabeau renewed his acquaintance with the Duc de Lauzun, *roué* and aristocrat, with whom in 1769 he had made the campaign of Corsica. He also met young Narbonne—now the bitter enemy of Necker—and, to be, the lover of Necker's daughter, Madame de Staël.

Mirabeau further frequented the *salon* of Mademoiselle Julie Carreau, afterwards Madame Talma, where he met some of the cleverest Bohemian society of Paris. Stricter houses, naturally, could not receive him. It was not only that he was clumsy and turbulent; it was not only his notorious past (the poor man had not an ounce of that "true fuller's earth for reputations"—money); it was not only that he was living with a woman to whom he was not married, but that even to her he was not faithful, and was continually plunged into brief, shameful passions. She forgave him, it is true—too easily perhaps. "I was calm as to his *liaisons* because I was sure of his heart." But it may be pardoned to the great ladies of Paris, or accounted to them for righteousness, that upon such flagrant ill-living they shut their doors.

At Panchaud's, Mirabeau met constantly a person

who was always delicately preaching to him, certainly not virtue, but *convenance,* and reproaching him for his *frasques,* not because they were wicked, but because they were rash.

The Abbé de Périgord was now about thirty years old, with the weak health, the limp, the thin, malicious smile, the arid heart, the cool and crafty mind, which distinguished him as Talleyrand.

Not yet his "irreverent reverence of Autun," he was already Agent-General of the clergy, foreseeing great changes coming upon his country, and meaning to find in them his own rise and fortune. He was certainly not the person to overlook the value, at such a time, of the inspired impulses and the bold and dominant nature of a Mirabeau. The Count was a coming man. The supple Abbé allied himself to him. Mirabeau took one of his large, vehement fancies to this new friend, introduced him to Calonne as everything that was clever and trustworthy, and fully meant the praise.

Mirabeau was still on some sort of terms with Calonne, despite the affair of the Bank of St. Charles. Panchaud and Clavière, however, had quarrelled with him. Mirabeau's reckless pen was, for the moment, idle. Let us use it! At the instigation then of Panchaud and Clavière, "the hunter down of humbugs" exposed yet one other trap set for the feet of the unwary speculator.

On October 2, 1785, Mirabeau published, under his own name, a fierce brochure *On the Shares of the Water Company of Paris* (*Sur les Actions de la Compagnie des Eaux de Paris*). The shares in the company fell on the sudden forty-four per cent.

Calonne was furious. In revenge he let loose upon me, said Mirabeau, "that mountebank of a Beaumarchais."

The author of the *Marriage of Firago* was no despicable foe. True, he fought only with needles and stiletto: and his adversary blasted with great guns. But Beaumarchais's light wit and weapons were better suited to so trivial a fray. Some day, says "Figaro" in his answer to that heavy brochure, "some punster will coin the pretty name of *mirabelles* as coming from the Comte de Mirabeau *qui mirabilia fecit.*" Then—boom, boom, boom—comes a second thunder from Mirabeau, which blew, metaphorically, the punster's sharp head nearly off his shoulders. But his pun had delighted the capital, and though he was worsted in the technicalities of argument, he seems to have been quite right in fact, while poor Mirabeau had fallen again into the fatal mistake of his family—and lost his temper. Calonne could make or mar him; but his fury with the minister was so great, that Talleyrand and Lauzun may be described as having hung, almost literally, on to the skirts of his fine, torn coat to prevent him from perpetrating yet worse imprudences and doing his career irreparable injury.

The shrewd Périgord persuaded Calonne that the same city would not hold this "burning reformer" and "easy Calonne" with his "light rash hand and suasive mouth of gold." "Send him to Prussia, and get him a post." To Mirabeau, Périgord put it, "*Go* to Prussia, well recommended; and a post shall be found you."

There was more than one reason why Mirabeau

should accept that prudent advice. His exposure of the stock-jobbing swindles had hurt many private interests, and among a certain section of society he was very well hated. True, when he had gone away, the Savoyard porters of Paris (seeing their business threatened by the project of a transport company) gathered outside the *hôtel garni* where they supposed him to be, and loudly demanded his help. "The Comte de Mirabeau always takes the part of the weak against the strong! A little while ago he prevented the water-carriers being ruined, he will not do less for us!"

But, after all, the Savoyards only represented the people, who, if they were very useful friends in the Paris of 1789, could do little in the Paris of 1785. It was better to go. Not only would lucrative employment be found him in Berlin, but he could write there with more freedom. He could get firsthand information for his book, a great book simmering in his head, on the "Prussian Monarchy." He had copious notes and ideas for a weekly journal—on the model of those he had seen in England. He knew German passably, if not well. It was better to go.

At the end of December, 1785, he, Madame de Nehra, Coco, who was now four years old, a dog, servants, and secretary (whom there was no visible means of paying) left Paris for Berlin, and, after various halts *en route,* reached the Prussian capital on January 19, 1786.

Mirabeau's very first act was to splash down a letter—three hundred octavo pages of ink and rage—against Calonne, "such a letter as never the bought

wrote to the buyer," said Mirabeau to his father when the old Marquis maddened him by speaking of his "venal pen."

He fortunately sent this rash document to Talleyrand, and that wise person, whose motto was for ever "Surtout, Messieurs, point de zèle," not only declined to publish the manuscript, but even to return it to its author. What he *did* do was to go to Calonne and warn him to use such talents as Mirabeau had, instead of exciting them to hostility.

Meanwhile, hearing that the old King Frederick the Great had been making inquiries as to the reasons of his coming to Berlin, Mirabeau boldly asked an audience of his Majesty, and was granted it.

On January 25, 1786, at Potsdam, there first met face to face the great aristocratic autocrat of the first half of the eighteenth century, and the great democratic autocrat of the latter half.

For Mirabeau to recognise in this shrivelled old man, who looked, said Lafayette, who saw him about this time, like "a decrepit and dirty corporal covered in Spanish snuff," one of the mightiest powers of the age that had gone, was easy enough. But for the old King to see in his visitor anything but a burly scoundrel, whose wit had made him infamous rather than famous, was more difficult.

Yet it seems that Mirabeau *did* impress the old monarch very favourably, for it was only after Frederick had received an immense, injudicious letter, asking for employment, which Mirabeau wrote to him the day after their interview, that the Comte d'Esterno states that the King "cooled" towards his guest. "Surtout, Messieurs, point de zèle," was

a maxim of which Mirabeau had much more need than Talleyrand.

Mirabeau had already other friends in Berlin. There was that Comte d'Esterno himself, the French Envoy, to whom the Count had been recommended, tepidly, by his government. Then there was a Marquis de Luchet, once the friend of Voltaire, and now the friend of Prince Henry of Prussia, the brother of Frederick the Great, and so a power at Court indeed.

Mirabeau soon won Prince Henry. "I know there is a great deal to be said against him," said the Prince, "but . . ." It was the old story again—the charm that had bewitched the reluctant Bailli and hostile jailers was at work once more. Mirabeau was soon an *habitué* of the Prince's house, and for a time the pair were mutually delighted.

Soon, too, Mirabeau could claim among his friends Ewart, Secretary to the British Embassy; Sir James Murray; Dohm, diplomatist and writer; and the famous mathematician, La Grange.

Meanwhile, at home, he was enjoying for a while a happiness he himself spoke of as "passably unalloyed." Debt and poverty, when they are chronic, cease, it seems, to be actively troublesome. Henriette still dispensed such order and economy as was possible. In view of her gentle prudence, and of the quiet wisdom that helped her to guide her wild companion when she could, and to bear with his fearful recklessness when she could not, it is difficult to remember that she was not yet twenty-one years old. For a time she too had a little peace and sunshine. Her health grew stronger. Coco was the dearest and brightest of intelligent little boys. He was not her

own, it is true, but he was hers to tend, love, and shelter. Mirabeau was always thinking and planning for the " dear little man's " education—he often wrote of the child thus—not less wisely and tenderly than he had planned for the education of the child he never saw, from the keep of Vincennes. Only, this time he was dealing with a woman capable of carrying out his ideas. She was the first of her sex, he said, he had ever seen who had attained to any kind of plan in education. Coco was also provided with a good Prussian *bonne,* so that he should speak German and French equally well.

Henriette has left a charming picture in her *Memoirs* of these home evenings in Berlin—when the day's work was done, and Mirabeau was not dining with Prince Henry, or booked for the evening to some tedious diplomatic reception. Like the great boisterous schoolboy he still was on the one side of his nature, he would play the wildest practical jokes with his secretary and a certain Baron de Nolde. They spared him a little, " not," says Henriette, " because he was the *patron,* but because every one was afraid of his blows."

His valet, Boyer, a worthless, good-natured scamp of a servant, used to show a magic-lantern—to Coco's round-eyed delight—and even write and act plays. When Henriette and the little boy came to see them, they sent notice in the morning, and Mirabeau made the author cut out " ce qu'il y avait de trop libre." Boyer was furious—the omissions spoilt his piece—ruined his style! But Mirabeau called out in his great voice, " Gare les oreilles, si Madame n'est pas contente," and the playwright bowdlerised hurriedly.

Those evenings were for Mirabeau only the very necessary corrective to days of fierce labour. When, later, he was the great Mirabeau, and his every characteristic worth noting, many a friend and foe bears witness to his "industry . . . beyond credulity." Now, Henriette declared it was "inconceivable what he got out of time." He went to bed about one A.M. By five, in the midst of the biting Prussian winter he was up again, working, half-dressed, and not having roused Boyer to light his fire.

In this winter and spring of 1786 he not only laid the foundations of that vast structure, his book on the Prussian Monarchy, and wrote a work to better the position of the Jews in Prussia, but, by March 25th, he had already for publication a long *Letter on Cagliostro and Lavater* (*Lettre du Comte de Mirabeau à M. —— sur MM. Cagliostro et Lavater*), wherein he exposed the impudent charlatanism of the one and the honest, but hardly less dangerous, fanaticism of the other.

It appeared. But, after all, what was it? Far lesser men than Mirabeau could unveil such humbugs. The "divine discontent" for little deeds of the man made for great, throbbed in his breast. He looked round Europe, as it were, and saw there portent and omen, the storm, fire, and earthquake coming on the world, while he, perforce, sat starving in Berlin, spending his soul on brochures on a couple of quacks, and tongue-tied as to greater issues because, if he spoke, no man would heed him. He was indeed ripe for any suggestion, agog to seize any chance, that would give him a hearing.

Then the French ministry proposed to him that

he should secretly observe and chronicle the affairs of Prussia for the benefit of France. As he wrote to his father a little later, "M. de Calonne found that the only way to muzzle me was to employ me." That view of the case the Abbé de Périgord, in high favour with the minister, warmly pressed home.

Mirabeau received a secret summons to return to France immediately. He went—on the very just excuse of the ill-health of his father and of his own finances. He wrote to Frederick the Great, asking if he had any commands for him.

On April 19, 1786, he saw the great King for the second and last time. The old monarch was dying —a poor, panting, huddled-up figure with his head bent on his breast, and his hands doubled with gout —but with his fiery soul still mastering the body— the man who, as Mirabeau said, would reign to the end. The two talked for an hour of tolerance, of the condition of the Jews, of the fate of Europe. Frederick died, says Lamartine, leaving prophecies of Mirabeau's genius.

Mirabeau immediately pursued his journey; called at Brunswick to see a Major Mauvillon, hereafter his most useful friend; and arrived in Paris on May 22d.

The capital was in a delirium—over the trial of that very unsavoury *cause célèbre,* the affair of the Diamond Necklace. One shabby observer, standing on May 30th in the thronging crowds waiting the verdict of the judges, saw, as he had a habit of doing, into the real significance and consequence of the matter. Once "authority would have covered absurdity by tyranny," and damned the Queen's enemies to the nethermost hell because they were her enemies.

"Happily that is no longer possible." But, as it is now, the case has irreparably damaged the prestige of royalty.

However, the observer had his own affairs to see to, desperately pressing and urgent. The worst straits of poverty he ever suffered, he suffered in this brief visit to Paris.

Restless and miserable, with his violent feelings written in his disorderly appearance, and violent need of means to live written there too, he went to see Périgord, then living in a convent in the Rue Saint-Dominique. The Abbé—always perfectly neat and cool—was empowered to act for Calonne. Mirabeau agreed, as he would have agreed to anything, save only to sell his soul and his real opinion, to act, for fifty louis a month, as the secret observer in Prussia for France, to take notes of the political and social situation, and to convey his impressions privately to Talleyrand and Lauzun for the benefit of Calonne and the King.

To prove he was competent to fill the post, by June 2d he had composed, for the eye of the French government only, a *Memoir on the Present Situation of Europe* (*Mémoire sur la Situation Actuelle de l'Europe*). He told his father later on that it was written as "a free man, and not a courtier." Indeed it was. It showed that France had sixty millions of annual deficit, a people taxed to ruination, a disabled navy, an insufficient army, inactive diplomacy —incapacity alike to maintain peace and to sustain war. Too plain-speaking this, surely, for an ease-loving Calonne! But a Talleyrand could never permit such an insight to waste, unused.

Mirabeau was back in Berlin in July—"an inferior officer in diplomacy," he called himself. On the strength of the fifty louis a month he engaged two new secretaries and launched into many new expenses. He soon found his secret post was suspected and resented in Prussian society—"a chiel amang you takin' notes" is *not* a pleasant idea. Then, too, he was known as the warm friend and partisan of the despised Jew, who had suffered cruelly under Frederick the Great. That friend of Mirabeau died on August 17, 1786, and Frederick William II. reigned in his stead. Mirabeau had already bored Prince Henry to death with the story of the countless *lettres de cachet* in use among the Mirabeau. Debts grew apace, as usual. By November, Mirabeau was calling out loudly to Talleyrand that, though he was "inconceivably economical" (!), his financial position was again approaching a crisis. "In short, my dear master, you must recall me or place me. . . . As for my capacity, judge of that yourself." He soon fell into anger and reproaches. He had in Berlin no sort of standing—a mere journalist, and not a recognised one at that—and a Mirabeau! His mind was made up. He would go.

On January 19 or 20, 1787, he left for Paris, bitter, miserable, disillusioned, and yet fiercely determined that the world should hear him.

CHAPTER XV

PREPARING FOR THE STATES-GENERAL

On December 29, 1786, Louis XVI. convoked the Notables.

The financial condition of France had aroused even easy-going Calonne to the necessity of doing something—at once. To conciliate an angry nation, and lest it should force him to a much more drastic measure—the assembling of the States-General—he bade the King convoke the Notables.

Mirabeau, in a private letter to Major Mauvillon, declared that the idea and plan of this convocation were his own.

He rushed home, then, post-haste, openly and confidently expecting to be appointed its secretary. But he had hardly arrived in Paris when he heard that the office had been given to an old friend of his own, Dupont de Nemours, "a man of smaller fame, but then of better."

On February 22d, the Notables assembled.

Before that date, Mirabeau had written and published his *Denunciation of Stock-jobbing to the King and to the Assembly of Notables* (*Dénonciation de l'Agiotage au Roi et à l'Assemblée des Notables*). As in a flash, the streets, the *salons*, the Court, the

boudoirs, and the Bourse, blazed forth the fame of Mirabeau, and France "resounded with his name."

The Loménie speak of the *Denunciation* as Mirabeau's revenge on Calonne's easy falseness—above all as a revenge for the secretaryship given to Dupont de Nemours. Calonne is not once named in the *Denunciation,* and "only at the end," says Lucas de Montigny, "is found a designation plainly applicable to him." It was not after this fashion the Mirabeau avenged their wrongs. The *Denunciation* is indeed noteworthy as being the first of Mirabeau's great series of attacks on the financial policy of Necker (which was, in fact, the policy of Calonne in a graver dress), and as the culmination of the battle begun with the huge pamphlet on the Bank of St. Charles. But it lives now as the first great effort of a great statesman's patriotism, and shows, for the first time, the man who, for his country, could thrust aside the private wrongs which chafed his haughty soul, and, in the thought of her ruin, forget his own.

It is Madame de Nehra who tells how, a month or two later, when she reminded him that he had come to Paris to see to his own chaotic money affairs, he replied that he had other things to think of than "such bagatelles as that." "Do you know what a crisis we are in; do you know that this horrible stock-jobbing is at its height, and that we have come to such a pass that there is not an *écu* in the Treasury?"

He drags aside, in his *Denunciation,* the flimsy curtain all the ministers, save only Turgot, had hung before the "shameful malady" of the finances, and shows the Notables the gangrene and the cancer eat-

ing away the life and the health of the body politic. The Notables, however, were only a council of not over-enlightened nobles, and quite deserved the title of Not-ables an English-speaking wit gave them. The King, indeed, said he considered the *Denunciation* had "rendered a great service." But all the same, he permitted Calonne to issue against the renderer of the "great service" a *lettre de cachet* condemning him to a God-forsaken fortress, the Castle of Ham.

Warned by his friends, however, Mirabeau had already fled to Liège. By March 19th, he was pouring out there his *First Letter on M. Necker's Administration,* in which he developed the policy of the *Denunciation* and his own lifelong attitude towards the Genevan banker—the contempt of bold genius for plodding mediocrity; of the eagle, with his flashing glance, for the burrowing mole; and, be it added, of the clever bad boy of the class for the commonplace good one.

A few days later, he was at Tongres, writing a *Second Letter on M. Necker's Administration,* which, foreseeing the approaching fall of Calonne, was designed to prevent at all hazards the recall of Necker in his place. On April 9th, Calonne fell. Mirabeau was back at Liège now, where Henriette and the child had joined him, and Henriette was persuading him to allow her to return alone to Paris and there smooth the way for his recall, as she had done before. She did it. Breteuil consented to be deaf, blind, and stupid, and in a very little while Mirabeau was walking about the capital as usual.

Then, leaving his *horde* in Paris, he went to

Brunswick for the advice and assistance of his coadjutor in his book on the Prussian Monarchy, Major Mauvillon, who was teacher of tactics in the Military Academy there.

Just before Mirabeau's arrival in Prussia, there appeared his *Letter to Frederick William II. of Prussia* (*Lettre à Frédéric-Guillaume*), which he had written nine months earlier, on the very day of the King's accession. It has been justly said to contain the fundamental articles of Mirabeau's political creed. In it he beseeches the young monarch to abolish compulsory military service and public lotteries, and to establish free justice, the English mode of trial, religious toleration, civil equality, free trade, and freedom of the press.

There had also appeared by now, published in London, his work *On Moses Mendelssohn and the Political Reform of the Jews* (*Sur Moïse Mendelssohn et la Réforme Politique des Juifs*), which had as its noble aim to gain civil and religious freedom for a greatly oppressed race.

The *Letter to Frederick William* gave great umbrage in social Prussia. Mirabeau was in enlightenment about a hundred years before his time, and no previousness is so bitterly resented as that. Besides, what business has this out-at-elbows foreigner to come here advising US? The book on the Jews also made him many enemies. But it obtained not the less what its author called, very truly, a "touching triumph." "The King of Prussia," he wrote on June 8th, "is now occupied in giving entire civil liberty to the Jews, and my demands did not exceed his concessions."

He was not quite three months in Prussia. When he got back to Paris, he found one friend, Panchaud, dismissed from the post he had held under government, and another, the wily Talleyrand, but too closely allied with that government. Mirabeau considered that the Abbé had played him false over the matter of the *lettre de cachet,* and as early as the April of this year, was writing of him in that fatally fluent Mirabese as "a being vile, sordid, greedy, designing, who only delighted in filth and money, who had sold his friend and his honour, and would sell his soul if a purchaser could be found for such trash."

Spurred by poverty, Mirabeau at once began beseeching the authorities to let him publish his *Prussian Monarchy*—that testimony to his genius—in France. They answered, No. Then, since something *must* be done, he demanded of Montmorin, who had succeeded Vergennes as Minister for Foreign Affairs, a diplomatic post "at Warsaw, Petersburg, Constantinople, Alexandria," anywhere! Again (Montmorin being the colleague and disciple of Necker) the answer was, No.

A good, weak man was this Montmorin. Governor Morris said he would have been "an excellent peace minister in quiet times"—in other words, would have done admirably when there was nothing to do. Mirabeau deafened the ears of this well-meaning incapacity with loud prophecies of the ruin coming upon France—nay, come, unless there are taken instantly the most drastic measures. "The Revolution will not tarry. The straits in which the great ship now is, are narrow and difficult. A clever pilot

can doubtless bring her to the open sea, and if there is time, she is saved."

That this "clever pilot" must of absolute necessity be marked with small-pox and named Gabriel-Honoré de Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau, was undoubtedly the writer's meaning. From now, until his election to the States-General, he may be described as forcing France to recognise his powers, as loudly claiming his share—and a lion's share it shall be!—in her great destinies, and pushing to his high appointed place, "to ride the whirlwind and direct the storm." Night and day, he bombarded the unhappy Montmorin with one fierce, perpetual demand. Summon the States-General! "France is no longer governable except by the States-General." Summon them! And I am not Mirabeau if—wretched and ill-famed as I am—I do not win a seat in that great assembly, and so a power and a voice to change the world!

Throughout this autumn of 1787 and the spring of 1788, his energy in urging was something incredible and unthinkable. Ragged and obstreperous, prophesying never the smooth things a Montmorin and his kind love to hear, demanding, insisting on what they dared not grant, they yet feared to throw him overboard, lest he should indeed be the one pilot to bring their ship to the haven.

"Mirabeau knew everything, and foresaw everything," said Madame de Staël.

In brief, he was indispensable.

In February, 1788, he was taken very ill with a violent internal inflammation, which his kindly doctor, Baignières, who was a relative of little Coco's, treated

with the yet more violent remedies then in vogue. Mirabeau told Dr. Cabanis afterwards, that this epoch was for him "the passage from summer to autumn." Henriette, who tended him night and day —he could never bear her to be out of his sight— also said that from this time he never ceased to suffer. He had indeed no leisure to attend to his health, as he had no leisure to attend to his money matters. But when Henriette became very ill herself, he turned his back for a moment on public affairs with a fierce contempt. "The private wound is deepest." His grief for her suffering was made ten times more bitter because, in his conduct to her, he had already much with which to reproach himself. When she got a little stronger, he furnished a little *appartement* for her and Coco at Passy, and often came to see them.

Directly he got up from his own sick-bed, and could leave Madame de Nehra, he began attacking Montmorin again to summon the States-General, as the only means of saving his country.

On April 18, 1788, he addressed to Montmorin a long letter, which Lucas de Montigny declares to contain the programme of his political life, and which contains further, in answer to Montmorin's request that Mirabeau would attack the Paris Parlements, with whom the government was at war, the haughty and Mirabeau-like declaration—"I will never wage war with the Parlement, save in the presence of the nation" (that is, before the States-General). The tyrannical and retrograde Parlements of France were much more hateful to Mirabeau than they could be to the government; but the Paris Parlement had quarrelled with Loménie de Brienne, who had suc-

ceeded Calonne as Controller-General, and, in order to spite him and gain the favour of the people, was ripe for any popular measure—even the summoning of the States-General. This, then, was not the moment to attack the Parlements.

There were naturally loud cries of venality when, not a month later, Mirabeau, pressed by poverty and Montmorin, *did* attack them in a pamphlet published anonymously, and called *The Reply to the Fears of Good Citizens* (*Réponse aux Alarmes des Bons Citoyens*). Yet, though he had acknowledged it was not the time to say it, there is not a word he says in that *Réponse* which he did not really believe. The system of the Parlements *was* rotten and abominable. If the *Réponse* defended the government, it also boldly and clearly demanded from it periodical national assemblies.

On August 8, 1788, Loménie de Brienne was forced by the rebellious Parlement of Paris to summon the meeting of the States-General, the Parlement refusing to increase the stamp tax as Loménie desired, declaring that the only power which could levy a permanent tax was the States-General.

A loud cry of joy ran through France. Mirabeau's exultation was not moderated or concealed. He declared that what he had prophesied to the government had indeed happened—"If you will not let them come walking, they will come galloping." But while the public rejoicing rang in his ears and found a loud echo in his own heart, at home he suffered one of the bitterest griefs and punishments of his life.

Henriette de Nehra left him for ever.

It has been seen that, in the five years they had lived together, she had forgiven him many infidelities. Had she kept to herself the nobler Mirabeau, she might have forgiven to the end. When they were in Berlin, in 1788, she speaks of his *liaison* with a "proud and vain woman," which troubled her not a little as leading Mirabeau into reckless extravagance of expenditure. But that passion burnt itself out, as others had done. Then in an evil day for his public, as for his private, honour he made the acquaintance of a certain Madame Lejay, the wife of one of his Parisian publishers. Insolent and clever, not without courage and resource of a high order, but wholly corrupt and unscrupulous, this evil woman saw at once the fatal moral and physical defect of Mirabeau's organisation, and at once played upon it for her gain and for his ruin.

She began by making him jealous of Madame de Nehra. Herself always cunning and composed, she excited his passions until he would return to Henriette with all the mad devil in him roused—insane, furious, suspicious. Henriette did indeed often succeed in bringing him to repentance. But his storms of remorse and self-reproach were scarcely less terrible than his rage. He wept, and cursed the cause of his misery. But the devil in her tempted the devil in him, and he always went back to her.

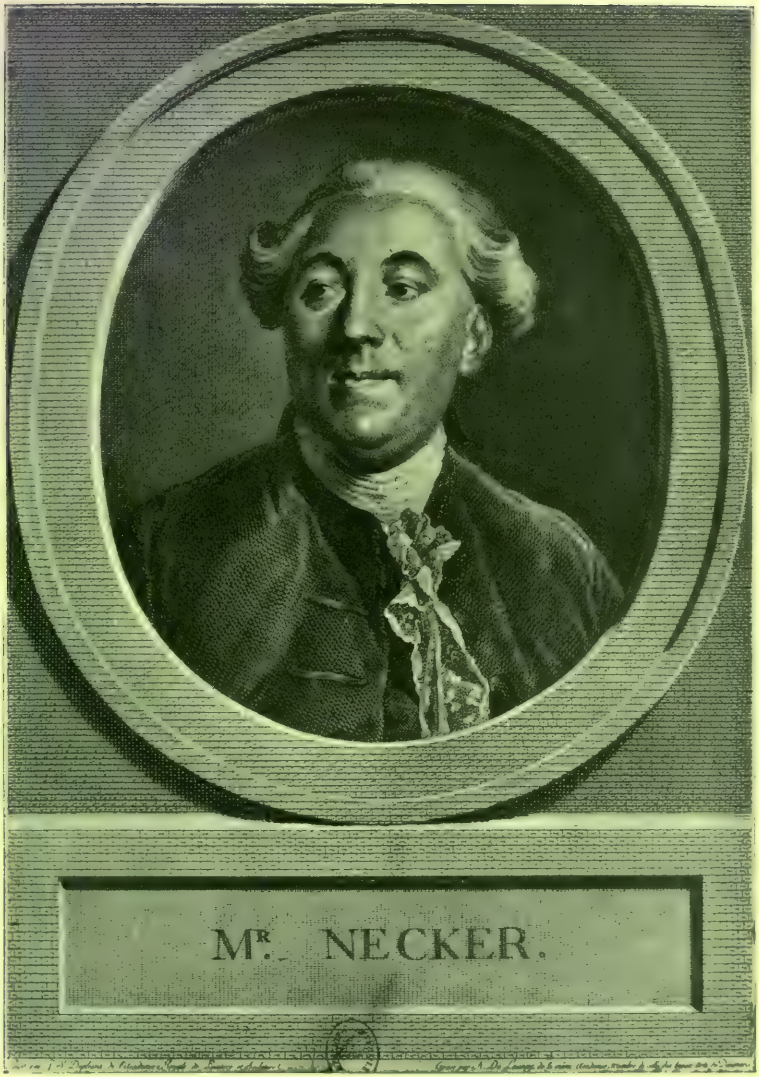
For six months, Henriette endured a life which was literally a hell upon earth. When she saw Madame Lejay entering into dishonourable business transactions with Mirabeau, and thus getting him into her evil power, she demanded, as the one condition on which his "best and only friend," as she

justly called herself, could remain with him, that he should break wholly with the publisher's wife. He would not. Or, was it rather, he could not?

On the morning of August 18th, in their little home at Passy, Henriette tore herself from the bedside of the poor little boy she had loved and tended, and, with no money except what the sale of her jewels brought her, went straight to England. She remained there a year—generously befriended by Lord Lansdowne and Vaughan.

In her Memoir, written in 1791, a few months after Mirabeau's death, she reproaches herself for having left him. She, and she alone, could bring to his "soul of fire" soothing and rest. She alone could, in any sort, guide and guard him. Terrible as her wrongs had been, she insists, both in that Memoir of 1791, and in the other, written at the request of Cabanis in 1806, how greatly her lover's virtues preponderated over his vices, how at his worst the true and noble shone through the mean and vile. She always speaks—and she knew him better than any other living creature—as if, for the fearful incontinence which was his destruction, he was not fully responsible. As for him—his house was left unto him desolate. He turned his thoughts to the great public destiny for which he was made. But he did not forget. Through all, and to his last breath, Henriette de Nehra remained close to his heart.

Meanwhile, events were moving rapidly. On August 25th, Loménie de Brienne, clever and grasping, but not clever enough to grasp the situation, fell from power as a consequence of his quarrel with the Parlement, and was succeeded by Necker.



JACQUES NECKER, CONTROLLER-GENERAL.

From an Engraving after Duplessis.

The "time-serving Mirabeau" was certainly quite as bold and energetic in opposing "this charlatan of a Necker, this king of the *canaille,*" as if Necker had been the darling of the Court instead of the darling of the people. Nor was his opposition tamed or intimidated by the fact that the Genevan banker had power to deny him the dearest wish of his heart—his election to the States-General. Nay, one avenue to his seat there, Necker *had* blocked. Mirabeau had thought of standing as a member for Alsace—when, in the nervous vehemence of his own untranslatable phrase, "Alsace, qui m'avait capté, provoqué, arrhé, à l'avénement de Necker a fouiné."

There was no great man in Paris—all France knew Mirabeau to be a great man now—in this summer of 1788, of such ill-repute, socially and politically, as poor Gabriel-Honoré.

Samuel Romilly and a friend of his, Étienne Dumont, a young Swiss pastor, arriving from England at this juncture in the French capital, found that the correct houses where they visited would by no means receive the Count. The strict Romilly decided, not unnaturally, that he would not trouble to renew his acquaintance with so *inconvenant* a person.

But there was about Mirabeau a large unconsciousness of disapproval, quite irresistible. Hearing Romilly was in Paris, he waited neither for etiquette nor invitation, rushed into his lodgings, fell into his arms, captivated Dumont, and, in a trice, was seeing them both daily and dining with them in the Bois or at St. Cloud.

Étienne Dumont, in those *Souvenirs sur Mirabeau* which deserve to be read for the charm and

freshness of their style, as well as for the interest of their subject, bears high testimony to Mirabeau's qualities and genius—the grudging testimony of a truthful man. Dumont quickly became, and remained to the end of Mirabeau's life, his very intimate and very useful friend. A warm or flattering friend he certainly was not. A few years ago, Lady Seymour published an English translation of Dumont's *Souvenirs,* which she happily entitled *The Great Frenchman and the Little Genevese.* That title gives the clue to the relations between the pair. The little man was more than a little jealous of the great man's greatness.

In the present instance, he declared, all the same, that he had "never seen any man who could be so agreeable and fascinating" as Mirabeau. "He was good company in every sense of the term; . . . it was impossible to keep up any reserve with him."

He made Romilly and Dumont dine with him at Vincennes, and showed them the historic keep he knew—too well. One eventful day, he took them, with Mallet du Pan, the Swiss publicist, to see the horrible *enceintes* of the prisons of Salpêtrière and the Bicêtre. Romilly, horrified with what he saw, wrote a vigorous description to a friend. Mirabeau translated it into French, and, with Romilly's consent, published the translation in Paris under the title of *Observation of an English Traveller on the Prison of the Bicêtre* (*Observations d'un Voyaguer Anglais sur la Maison de Force appelée Bicêtre*).

It contains a description of the shameful condition of the place, with details as to the treatment of the prisoners which still make the blood run cold. "I

knew, as everybody knows, that the Bicêtre was both a hospital and a prison, but I did not know that the hospital had been constructed to breed disease and the prison to breed crime."

Then, as has been seen in considering Mirabeau's attitude to English criminal law, the *Observations* pleaded passionately that punishments should be first of all reformative, and never inordinately severe. In *A Letter to Benjamin Franklin,* which was added to the *Observations,* the author inquires very pertinently, "If I am not barbarous, bloody, and vindictive enough to kill any one who has robbed me of 14*s.* 3*d.,* how can I approve of a law which does it?" Surely, if the hand which penned the words is the hand of Esau, the voice is Jacob's voice not the less.

When Romilly got back to England, he generously acknowledged that fact by publishing the *Observations* (in English) as a translation from Mirabeau. In Paris they received the only compliment to such a work really worth having—they were instantly suppressed by the police. Their author was well dreaded as one of those uncomfortable persons who, as Welschinger has put it, wherever there was "wrong to right, injustice to expose . . . wrote, spoke, acted. He filled France with the noise of his name and the thunder of his denunciations."

On their way back to England, he stayed with Romilly and Dumont for a fortnight at Chantilly, discussing with them projects for the States-General. Before they left, he gave Dumont a list of not less than eighteen subjects, on which he desired books sent to him from England.

One other friendship, more fruitful to him than

Dumont's, Mirabeau also formed in this summer of 1788.

The Prince de Poix, governor of Versailles, gave a very polite dinner-party one day, at which were present the Princesse de Poix, the Comte and Comtesse de Tessé, the Vicomte de Noailles, and the Comte de la Marck.

Auguste-Marie-Raymond, Prince d'Aremberg and Comte de la Marck, was at this time about thirty-five years old, one of the most admirable examples of the aristocrats of the *régime,* cultivated, upright, modest, sincerely religious, thoughtful, self-controlled —if not a very powerful intellect, at least a most charming character. He was the son of a favourite general of Maria Theresa. He was of the *société intime* of Marie Antoinette, and one of the few wise influences about her. He was also to be, what Dr. Cabanis calls, the " invisible angel " of the Comte de Mirabeau, and thus the avenue through which, had the salvation of monarchy been permitted, it would certainly have come.

Into this select assembly, with an especial view of introducing him to La Marck, M. Sénac de Meilhan brought Mirabeau.

La Marck was not at all favourably prepossessed by Gabriel-Honoré's immense, thick, square figure, by his huge head, made more huge by the vast crop of powdered curly hair, by his loud, careless, pretentious dress, with enormous shoe-buckles and exaggerated buttons. And then his manners! That polished company drew back, horrified, into its shell and an icily polite reserve before this Person's large, lavish airs and hectoring speech. " He had neither

the language nor the usages of the society in which he found himself." As for the compliments in which he indulged to the women, they were of a kind so cheerfully evident and fulsome, that one can hardly think without a smile of the disgust with which they must have inspired a Princess and a Countess accustomed to the most exquisitely delicate of hints and innuendoes.

The Duke of Wellington is reported to have said of Napoleon Bonaparte that he was "emphatically *not* a gentleman." Neither was Mirabeau. Only, in the one case as in the other, the man's greatness is so great that such class distinctions seem mean and contemptible.

When, after the Prince's dinner-party, the women had left and the talk became serious, "everything that had struck one as ridiculous about Mirabeau disappeared"; that he was florid, vulgar, and copious was forgotten. He was intellectually a giant among pigmies, and the pigmies knew it.

But Mirabeau had something else to do besides cultivating new friends. That one dominant idea possessed him—his election to the States-General. As he had written the *Memoir on the Present Situation of Europe* to prove to the ministry that he was worthy to be entrusted with the secret mission to Berlin, so in this summer of 1788 he published, in London and with the house of Lejay in Paris, his book on the Prussian Monarchy (*De la Monarchie Prussienne*) to prove to the nation he was not the man to be left out of its councils.

The *Prussian Monarchy,* of which the idea occurred to Mirabeau before the end of 1785, and on

which he had been intermittently at work since that time, is, it must be candidly owned, unspeakably long and dull. Major Mauvillon had generously supplied the author with innumerable facts and statistics, all excellently correct and conscientious. Romilly, in fact, declared that "everything but the style" was Mauvillon's. What a "but"! "It matters very little what we say," wrote Tennyson, "it is how we say it, though the fools don't know it." If, indeed, Romilly had been right, and even the style alone had been pure Mirabeau, Paris might really have read the *Prussian Monarchy,* instead of only admiring, talking, and writing as if it had read it. But Mirabeau was just, as well as generous when he wrote to Mauvillon, as he always did, of "*our* work." For all that diligence could give Mauvillon had given, and of that which no diligence can supply Mirabeau had added too little.

Still, the *Prussian Monarchy* does contain, besides an excellent study of Frederick the Great, a masterly *résumé* of Mirabeau's political principles, and ample proof of his vast knowledge of government, finance, and law. As he himself said, it was written *of* Prussia, but *for* France; and it admirably answered its purpose. "One can form no idea," says Fauche Borel in his *Memoirs,* "how this production raised, I do not say the author, but the man, in public opinion." Now long forgotten and superseded by the magnificent daring and genius of his own career and statesmanship, the *Prussian Monarchy* was not the less Mirabeau's passport and letters-credential to the States-General.

Alsace would have none of him. So much for

Alsace! There was a more obvious way to his goal. It was one of the conditions of eligibility for election that the member should possess a landed property. Mirabeau had none. What more natural than that his father should give him one of his Provençal estates, and see his family represented in the coming Parliament by his eldest son?

By the end of August the old Marquis had received, very sulkily, an emissary of peace from Gabriel-Honoré, in the shape of the Bishop of Blois, a relative of the family. The Friend of Men replied to the Bishop's overtures with his usual violence, and swore he would have been dead long ago if he had not "ignored and forgotten that *fougueux* and devoted enemy of the human race," Count Gabriel-Honoré. But violence is generally the sign of weakness, not of strength.

On August 28th, Mirabeau wrote himself very humbly to his father, begging "the happiness of throwing himself at his feet"; and not less humbly to his father's ruler—Madame de Pailly.

Then he appealed to his uncle: "The government has begun to recognise that in the days of ferment, when few heads will keep cool . . . I shall not be useless. . . . Please second the efforts of the Bishop of Blois with my father." But, alas! the nephew had been ungrateful enough to write little to his uncle, and the good Bailli saw no reason for doing any more for him.

Finally, then, the author of the *Prussian Monarchy* added to that work a rich, sonorous, and most humble and filial dedication to the Marquis de Mirabeau. The old man who had cursed "the firebrand publicist,"

" the snarling dog . . . always ready to bite " of the financial pamphlets, had grudgingly approved of the *Letters on Necker's Administration* and the book on the Jews. Under lowering eyebrows the old eyes had gleamed now and then, in spite of himself, with pride in his rascal.

The dedication was very flattering: such generous apologies for the writer's " stormy youth"; such handsome acknowledgment of the value of the political economy (under which that youth had suffered so grievously)! " Well, one must see what there is in this fat book! " The Marquis sat down and read the whole thing from beginning to end, which was more than most people did. He sent a long analysis of it to his brother. Gabriel is certainly a " centaure de travail." But there is a Voltairianism about his religious views, of which I do not at all approve, and which I must, in duty bound, argue out of him! This pretext the old Marquis threw as a sop to his pride, and in the middle of October, 1788, after an absence of six years, father and son met at Argenteuil.

CHAPTER XVI

THE "SECRET HISTORY" AND THE CAMPAIGN IN PROVENCE

THE Marquis of Mirabeau was by now seventy-three years old, gouty, physically failing, and mentally exceedingly alert. His house in Paris he had given to the du Saillants, who had an enormous family. The estate of Bignon they had bought from him. He had, therefore, hired a house at Argenteuil—that old town, eleven miles from Paris, once the retreat of Héloïse.

The Bailli lived chiefly at Mirabeau, and continued to write his brother long, wise, affectionate letters. In 1778, he had headed a coalition of the family to separate the Marquis from Madame de Pailly. It was unsuccessful. Not always with him, that sinuous charmer crept in and out of his life, snake-like and silent. Her ascendancy over him was the greater because he was by now deeply in her money debt. The Marquise de Mirabeau was still in a convent. Louise de Cabris had just come out of one, where her father had placed her for three years, as a corrective to her light behaviour. Tonneau had vastly pleased his father by marrying, in this July of 1788, a Mademoiselle de Robien. But Tonneau—who, as

Gabriel-Honoré said, "in any other family but ours would have been a clever man and a *mauvais sujet*" —was but a poor substitute for his elder brother, and was already deeply addicted to what he describes as "the only vice" Gabriel "had left him"—drink.

Certainly the time seemed ripe for a reconciliation. The scene of Mirabeau's meeting with his father at Argenteuil has been dramatised by M. Jules Claretie, and very likely it was dramatic enough. One can see the old father, snarling and obstinate; and yet more than half proud of the son's tempestuous genius: and Mirabeau, amply apologising for the shortcomings of himself and his *Prussian Monarchy,* and listening meekly to the paternal scoldings and lectures. He came again, self-interested to win his father: and yet disinterestedly loving him too. The old man softened a little before the fire of his boy's warm heart and lavish tongue. But only a little. He ended by utterly declining to give him one of his Provençal estates; and Mirabeau saw yet another avenue to his election to the States-General finally closed.

He turned back once more to Lauzun and to Montmorin—to the government. It must help him, and it shall! By November 10th, he had bought, partially at least through the help of that government, a little fief in Dauphiné, the possession of which would, he hoped, render him eligible for election. Then he organised, with Panchaud, a political club, which developed into the famous Constitutional Club, of which Lafayette, Condorcet, and Talleyrand became members.

Before the year was out, Mirabeau had produced a vigorous pamphlet *On the Liberty of the Press*

(*Sur la Liberté de la Presse*), imitated from Milton's *Areopagitica*, and prefaced with Milton's words, "Who kills a man, kills a reasonable creature, God's image: but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself." As usual, Mirabeau plunged straight into his subject with a fine splash and dash. In the freedom of the press, he saw, says M. Vermorel, "the sovereign remedy for all the evils of France." He ended with a spirited apostrophe to those who were to form the States-General.

The next moment he had turned again to his frenzied efforts that he himself might not be left out of that great company. "Ah! M. le Duc," he wrote to Lauzun, "let us be at the States-General at any cost: we shall lead it, and do great things, and have joys better than all the playthings of the Court." True, his fief was bought and paid for. But there remained the expenses of his electioneering campaign, which he was totally unable to meet. In his case there were many angry creditors whose mouths must be stopped, with gold. There were secretaries who must be paid. Madame de Nehra's long illness and his own had taxed his miserable resources to the utmost. His credit was everywhere exhausted. The winter of 1788–89 set in with cruel rigour. Famine, wretchedness, and unrest were everywhere in the land. Mirabeau's own fortunes Dumont described as at their "lowest ebb."

Yet there was that something in him—call it folly or honesty—or *de l'audace, et encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace*—which made him produce, on January 8, 1789, a series of Letters he had written to Cerutti—Cerutti being a Jesuit of Turin, and a

violent partisan of Necker. In these Letters Mirabeau had attacked the people's idol, and that system of paper-money which was Necker's last, desperate effort to save the financial situation, with a perfectly plain-spoken abusiveness which would surely have made any other man, just about to appeal to the suffrage of that people, at least postpone their publication. But recklessness—for good or for evil—beat in every pulse of this man's body. In the *Letters to Cerutti* (*Lettres à Cerutti*) he announced his coming departure for his electioneering campaign in Provence, where he proposed to stand, as a noble, for his native Aix or for Marseilles. On January 8th he left Paris.

He had hardly turned southward before there appeared in the capital the *Secret History of the Court of Berlin* (*Historie Secrète de la Cour de Berlin*), that is, the Secret Correspondence with the French government, written on his mission to Berlin.

These Letters were the object and result of that secret mission with which he had been entrusted, and for which he had been paid by the French ministry, from July, 1786, until January, 1787.

Addressed to Talleyrand and to Lauzun, they discussed, with the astonishing sagacity and outspokenness of the man who found for the first time in his life that plain-speaking was his interest as well as his impulse, the attitude of France towards the other European Powers. They laid bare the secret designs of Russia and Austria, and the secret iniquities of Prussian finance and commerce. They exposed the decadence of the Prussian monarchy under the feeble successor of Frederick the Great,

descanted with a large openness and an infinite acuteness upon the love and the money affairs of royal persons; and revelled in scandals concerning generals, diplomatists, and Court favourites. They also indulged in prophecies—so soon and so marvellously fulfilled to the very letter that one can scarce believe they *were* prophecies and not history written after the events. The reader of to-day will be astounded —as Chateaubriand expressed himself astounded in 1821—"by the lightness and incapacity of the government who, seeing the correspondence of such a man, did not divine what he was. . . . The future of Europe is in every line."

As for the style—"of all the productions of the mind of Mirabeau," says his great German biographer, Stern, "there is not one which bears so strikingly his personal mark." The broad brush, the bold and burning colours, the vast canvas, the daring treatment—all are Mirabeau essentially and Mirabeau alone.

One copy of the Letters he had sent home; one he preserved himself.

Paid for by the ministry, the *Secret History* was the property of that ministry. Mirabeau must have known that in selling it for publication, or in allowing it to be thus sold, there lay the deepest dishonour. It contained, he was very well aware, that which every one wanted to know, and no one had any right to say—aloud. But he was poor, with that nipping poverty which no man, not having felt, should dare to judge. On his having money at this juncture, lay not only his own future but the future of France. "Ah! M. le Duc, let us be at the States-General *at*

any cost!" On December 28, 1788, he had given Montmorin a last chance to help him to his end, without descending to the infamy of the publication of the *Secret History.* "Without the help, at least the secret help, of the government," he wrote, "I cannot be at the States-General."

The woman, whose counsels were always to do right, had left him; and at his side for ever was the evil genius whose counsels were always to do wrong. Not only shrewd and cunning, but a most imperious and daring personality, Madame Lejay could urge, and did not fail to urge, the plea that by producing the *Prussian Monarchy* her husband had been half ruined, and, with her husband, herself; and that here, by the publication of a few private papers, Mirabeau might save at once his mistress, his friend, himself—and his country. She thus appealed, in one appeal, to the best and the worst in him.

"Venal, shameless, and yet greatly virtuous . . . but never truly virtuous because never under . . . the firm authority of principle," wrote Governor Morris of the great orator of the Revolution. It well describes him now. He has had his partisans who have sought to deny his part in the sale of the *Secret History.* Perhaps Beaumarchais, his old foe, got hold of it, and published it out of spite? Or perhaps Comps, his young secretary, who was supposed to keep the manuscript under lock and key, sold it without his knowledge? An expert, M. Louis Dubois du Déert, has declared that the corrections in the manuscripts are not in the hand of Mirabeau. It may be so. But it is practically proved that, if he did not sell the thing, he permitted it to be sold;

and his real friends will do best to own honestly, with one of the truest friends he ever had, Lucas de Montigny, that, prompted by motives not all base and not all selfish, and only "after a violent struggle with himself," he did commit that act of dishonour.

No one could have anticipated—Mirabeau certainly did not in the least anticipate—the *furore* and the excitement the publication of the *Secret History* caused in the capital he had just left. In ten days, in spite of the efforts of the police, twenty thousand copies were at large; and the work had attained a *succés de scandale* indeed.

The government was naturally furious. Its confidence had been betrayed. That Montmorin should forgive the bold betrayer was unlikely. Nor did Talleyrand, who saw himself and his cupidity plainly exposed in those pages, ever pardon the exposer; though he seemed to pardon him, later, because Talleyrand was himself too clever a man to be the open foe of the greatest man in France. The Court was enraged. Prince Henry of Prussia—of whom Mirabeau had wearied, and whom he had therefore depicted with the Mirabeau candour—was at the moment its guest. To be sure, the Prince himself was wise enough to take the affair quite coolly; and even bought copies of the work and presented them to his friends.

Necker, already bitterly insulted by the *Letters to Cerutti,* was offended because the audacious prophecies of this bold prophet were actually in some cases already realised: while his own prognostications were proved ridiculous.

The Constitutional Club threatened its founder

with expulsion. The Prussian government demanded that he should be punished. But, as Montmorin told the Prussian Ambassador, though King and Council had never so ardently desired to end an odious business by a *lettre de cachet*, "in the present condition and disposition of minds, it is impossible"; which, being translated, meant "The People are for Mirabeau, and of the People we are afraid."

Meanwhile, Mirabeau had travelled through a black and bitter country, scourged with frost and famine, which looked everywhere, he wrote to his father, as if "the Angel of Death had struck humankind from one end of the kingdom to the other." In Provence, the cruel winter had killed the olive trees. But there, at least, it was only the temperature that was cold.

The whole province was in a state of ferment. Its own local political conditions had reached a crisis. Its hot-headed people—"exalted by a burning sun," oppressed by a peculiarly arrogant aristocracy, judged by courts of justice whose injustice was a by-word, and in constant commercial intercourse, through the great port of Marseilles, with free nations like the English—the men of Provence were of all Frenchmen the most ripe for revolution. They had not forgotten the "terrible pleader" of the famous lawsuit, tried in Aix in 1783, when Mirabeau had defied his caste, when their enemies had been his enemies, and he had been at once beaten and victorious. Seeing in him, noble though he was, and candidate for the *noblesse* as he had come to be, the friend of the people, all humble Aix and all her *bourgeois* flocked to him as he rode into her streets,

adored him, and pelted him with acclamations, petitions, and *vivats*.

But the nobles remembered him too. Filled with pride and the lavish hospitality of the Marignanes in their hotel in the Rue Mazarine, the aristocracy of the city beheld the new candidate with a pretty equal mixture of rage and fear. They did, after all, what was the most natural thing they should do in the circumstances. They put their heads together, and, before Mirabeau had been in Aix many days, had discovered, with great regret and politeness, that Comte Gabriel-Honoré's papers, proving his eligibility for election, were most unfortunately made out too late: that to be the purchaser of a fief was quite insufficient, he must also be its possessor by inheritance as well; and that, further, there was a genealogical difficulty in the way of his candidature to which they must call his attention. But they did not know, though they ought to have known, the man with whom they had to deal. He had foreseen—with that piercing eye which saw everything—their attitude towards him. "These gentry," he wrote ominously to his sister Caroline, "will make me become the tribune of the people in spite of myself—*si je ne me tenais à quatre.*"

Not the less, at two preliminary meetings of the nobles he was present as one of themselves; and on January 25th, when the local States-General of Provence met at Aix for its inaugural procession, Portalis, Mirabeau's brilliant rival in the famous lawsuit, described the Count as significantly walking last of the nobles—as if coming between them and the Third Estate—in the rich and distinctive dress of his

particular degree of nobility, with his hand on his sword, his white plumed hat under his arm, his thick hair thrown back from his forehead and tied at the back with a great black ribbon which fell on his shoulder; and a piercing and scrutinising look—a "*regard provoquant* which seemed to interrogate the multitude."

Since his arrival in Aix, Mirabeau had suffered greatly with an inflammation of the eyes as well as in his general health. But these facts had not prevented him from, almost literally, speaking and writing all day, and preparing those speeches and writings all night. "I alone, apparently, among people of quality," he wrote with a fine sarcasm to Comps, "have not been gifted with knowing everything without having learnt anything."

On January 30th, at one of the earliest meetings of the Provençal States, he rose, and in a speech which was the careful result of that learning, and which was couched in studiously moderate language, proposed one of the most radical, drastic, and far-reaching of all political changes—"Every citizen must be either elector or elected."

To urge that each *class* should be represented in the government was a bold demand then: to urge that every individual be represented was an audacity that brought nobles and clergy to their feet in a trice. The sweet reasonableness of its tone, and the fact that the Count was known to be attacking the rules for admission to the States-General largely because those rules bade fair to make his own election impossible, did not blind even the two blindest classes of men in the world to its real significance. The Third ap-

plauded loudly. The next day nobles and clergy presented a formal protest against the Count's harangue. As they came out of the assembly the mob hooted and howled them down. In feeble retaliation on that mob and the Third Estate, and in a pathetically ridiculous attempt to silence Mirabeau, the King's commissioners suspended the meetings of the Provençal Assembly until April 21st.

But if Mirabeau could not speak, he could still be heard. He had prepared a speech in answer to the formal protest. On February 5th, he printed it. When his adopted son speaks of the celebrated adjuration it contains as "an immortal monument of eloquence," his judgment is not misled by his affection. "What, then, have I done which is so culpable? I wished my order to be clever enough to give to-day what will infallibly be torn from it tomorrow . . . this is the crime of *the enemy of peace* —or, rather, it is that I believed the people could be in the right . . . I thought that when the people complained it had always a reason . . . that its unwearied patience waits until the last degree of oppression before it resolves on resistance: that it never resists long enough to obtain the redress of all its grievances; that it forgets too often that to make itself formidable to its foes it is enough if it remains immovable, and that the most innocent, as well as the most invincible, of all powers is the power of refusing to act." Finally: "I have been, I am, and shall be, the servant of public liberty and of the Constitution. Woe to the privileged orders! Better be the man of the people than of the *noblesse:* for privileges will have an end, but the people is for ever."

The rude energy of the rugged phrases still stirs the blood—the blood of men far off, unoppressed and unconcerned. What effect must it have had on those hot southerners, with centuries of wrongs and suffering behind them, with famine and tyranny in their midst, and, red against the horizon of the future, a revolution which their Mirabeau had assured them could never be stopped "because it is already begun in public opinion"?

The *noblesse* perceived that something must be done at once—that they had trifled with this giant too long. They summoned a great meeting of the nobles, where each must furnish proof of his right to sit, as a noble, in the States-General. Pointing to a table, on which lay the title-deeds of all the owners of fiefs in the county, the first Consul of Aix, M. de la Fare, demanded of Mirabeau that he should justify his presence among them. He answered scornfully that he had not his archives in his pocket; and so turned and left them. By a great majority they voted, as they had meant to do, that he was not qualified to take part in their meetings; and, thus, was not qualified to sit as a noble in the National Assembly.

Dismissed! Rejected! That should be fatal for the rejecters, but the rejected could bear it well!

It was on February 8th his own order spurned him. On the 11th, appeared his *Address to the Provençal People* (*À la Nation Provençale*), which brushed aside the question of the fief as small and beside the mark. "It is not that which gives me a right to be useful to my country. A Provençal, a man, and a citizen, I claim no other titles."

He had given aristocracy its chance to make use of him, and it had refused it. Henceforth that chance should be the people's—erring, weak, tyrannous, unstable as it might be, but at least able to recognise a Mirabeau when it saw him.

On the very day he had published his *Address to the Provençal People,* he had written to the editors of the *Journal de Paris,* formally and categorically denying that he had had any part in the publication of the *Secret History.*

It was characteristic of what, for want of a better phrase, may be called Mirabeau's moral bluntness, that he never realised to the full, the dishonour of that act. Though Comps continued to send to Provence the most lurid accounts of the effect it was creating in Paris, Mirabeau at first refused to treat the affair with anything but a large indifference. What *does* such a trifle matter, after all, with the kingdom rushing to its destruction? "When they are tired of making a noise they will be quiet." The words "never" and "always," my dear Comps, are quite inapplicable to the French people! Then his enemies in Provence caught the infection of rage and opprobrium. "They say shocking things here" about the book. "I am nothing less than a mad dog . . . to that I reply, So much the more reason to elect me, for if I am a mad dog, despotism and privilege will die of my bite."

Only, what if they made the *Secret History* a barrier to that election, the last, best excuse to prevent it? When that view occurred to Mirabeau, he wrote to Comps a private letter, which the faithful young man would of course show to everybody, non-

chalantly denying his part in the publication. On February 10th, the thing was burnt in Paris by the hangman (which naturally made it, as Horace Walpole wrote to the Countess of Ossory, "on wings of flame come flying all abroad"). The next day, Mirabeau wrote that denial, which was not nonchalant at all, but explicit, vehement, reiterated—the denial of Peter, with an oath—to the *Journal de Paris*. He had become so far alive to the ugly importance the thing might have, that he judged it better to return to the capital, "for in my absence many heads lift themselves against me which would hang before me." That denial in the *Journal* had, in fact, but just stopped his public prosecution by the Parlement. Talleyrand would not meet him. Montmorin repudiated his further acquaintance in a letter of cold disdain. Panchaud, Lauzun, Dupont de Nemours, who were still, tepidly, his friends, only dared to see him secretly. He spent a week not actually in the city, but at Polangis, opposite the Bridge of Saint Maur, at a house which he had bought originally for his rendezvous with Madame Lejay. All the time he went about lying, boldly, thoroughly, constantly. The Letters themselves have been "mutilated, interpolated, envenomed"! Published by me? Never! What did a few lies—or many lies—matter beside "a decree to prevent my sitting in the States-General . . . and to rob the people of its defender"?

"La petite morale tue la grande," was one of his own dangerous maxims. He acted on it now.

On February 28th, he was able to leave Paris—confident it dared not hurt him—and return to Provence.

By now, the whole countryside was aflame for its deliverer. The people had learnt to love him when he came among them as candidate for the *noblesse*. Now, when he returned as Tribune of the People, the villages sent out deputations to meet him, and the bells were set ringing in the steeples of the churches. At Lambesc, near Aix, the populace would have unhorsed his carriage and pulled it themselves, but Mirabeau, with that fine histrionic instinct which seldom failed him, stopped them, saying, "Men are not made to carry a man, and you have too much to bear already." In the streets of Aix there were ten thousand people abroad, shouting, weeping, adoring. From the balcony of a house, which is to-day No. 10 Rue des Trois Ormeaux, he harangued them with that great voice, that vehement emotion, that extraordinary mingling of *hauteur* and familiarity, of masterfulness and affection, which made him, in the best sense, demagogue born. The crowds followed him, acclaiming, to his lodging in the Place des Prêcheurs, and, when he went in his sedan chair in the evening to dine with Jaubert (his old friend and counsel in the lawsuit against his wife), they accompanied him with plaudits and music.

The nobles were afraid to show their faces. When some of them, dining at a house in the Place des Prêcheurs and hearing the loud rejoicings, did appear without for a moment, the crowd howled them in again. The director of the Aix theatre begged his great townsman to attend a special performance. He refused, fearing the enthusiasm would overstep all bounds. On March 7th, a deputation from Marseilles, it is said, actually forced its way into the

Marignane house, and haranguing the Comtesse de Mirabeau (who was hiding behind those thick walls, not a little frightened and disgusted), bade her, with many a coarse phrase, be reconciled to her husband —"the Mirabeau are too good a race to become extinct."

On March 18th, Mirabeau left Aix for Marseilles, choosing—"for more certainty or more show"—to appeal to the suffrage of that town as well as of Aix, though he must have known his election by the Third of his own city was now a foregone conclusion.

One of the great signs of his genius—having regard to his vain and vainglorious character—is that now, as later, the adulation of that people did not in the least blind him to its faults. "None does more harm to the people than the people itself," he had written to Caroline du Saillant a month or two earlier. "Mad with fury against mere *bêtises,* soft and weak on the most important points"—children, not men; children, wilful, foolish, ill-taught, ill-treated—children, loving and lovable, whom one must needs pity and save.

From first to last that was Mirabeau's attitude towards the Third who returned him to Parliament. In his paternity towards them there lay, for them, at once his charm and his power.

If Aix had been excited at his entry, Marseilles was mad. He was received with military honours. The authorities came out to meet him. The flags of the vessels then in the port were hung outside his lodging. Twenty-five thousand people were in the streets. Three hundred carriages followed his, which

was covered with palms and olive branches. Windows were let at one and two louis apiece to spectators of the scene. At the Marseilles theatre, which he attended on the night of his arrival, he was received with such excitement that the actors had to retire and the play to be stopped. As if all this were not enough, Mirabeau wrote an anonymous account of himself in a letter, purporting to come from a citizen of Marseilles, asking the Marseillais to elect both Mirabeau and the Abbé Raynal, in which the Count blew his own trumpet so exceedingly loudly as to proclaim himself the "best citizen and the greatest orator of his age . . ." with "courage more marvellous even than his talent," and of principles so exalted that no human power "can make him desert them"! The story, once widely believed, that to ingratiate himself with the Third, he opened a cloth shop in Marseilles, is destitute even of probability. He had neither the time nor the necessity for any such farce.

By March 20th, he had driven back those thirty-six kilometres to Aix, and by that time the voices raised to greet him in Marseilles had changed their note. The city was starving—as half Provence was starving too. All over the province were insurrection and murder—misery pushed to vengeance at last —here, blazing *châteaux;* at Toulon, the bishop's palace sacked; everywhere, bands of malcontents, wolfish and desperate.

Between March 20th and 23d, fierce crowds gathered round the Hôtel de Ville of Marseilles, demanding the reduction in the price of bread to the fixed rate of two sous per pound. The town was papered

with seditious placards. The mayor had to escape by the roof of his house, and leave the place in disguise. At night on the 23d, M. Caraman, the military governor of Provence, arrived from Aix, harangued the people, and, being a wise and a popular person, somewhat quieted them. Thinking the worst was over, he returned to Aix. In a moment, the fury he had calmed blazed out again. Then a certain M. Brémond-Julien, a young barrister of Marseilles, took upon himself to send, not for Caraman, but for Mirabeau. "All is lost," ran his message, "if one yields to the people; all is lost if one uses force. Your presence may calm things. When men are no longer any use, one has recourse to the gods."

Mirabeau received the message on the night of March 23d. In the very early morning of the 24th, he communicated it to Caraman. "Do what your head and heart dictate," responded the Governor.

Once again Mirabeau took that familiar road to Marseilles. He found the city in an uproar—the houses of the *fermiers généraux* razed to the ground —the corn stores besieged, and everywhere the mob. He harangued it, in that thunderous voice it knew and loved. But it takes more than argument—though the argument be a god's—to quiet starving men with such blood in their veins and such wrongs in their souls as had these Marseillais. Then Mirabeau, who was the idol not only of the people but of the *bourgeois,* conceived the happy idea of forming from that *bourgeois* a special constabulary of young men for the protection of the town, property, and food shops.

For a few hours it worked, and worked well. But

on March 25th, came an urgent summons from Caraman that Mirabeau should return to his own city to quell a worse riot there. He rode round to see his young constables at their posts, put them on their honour to do well, and galloped back to Aix post-haste. There, on a crowd of vagabonds gathered round the Hôtel de Ville, M. de la Fare had caused the troops to fire; and the mob had turned on the soldiery, stoned, shot, and routed them—wounding in the fray their favourite Caraman. Then they set to work to pillage the town and the food stores.

At this juncture—that is at 3 A.M. on the morning of March 26th—Mirabeau arrived. He described that day to Brémond-Julien as "the most terrible day that mortal ever suffered in the lottery of life." When the spring dawn showed in the sky, he persuaded, or bade, Caraman to recall the troops, and leave the town in his (Mirabeau's) keeping. "In a moment I formed pickets of *bourgeois*"—that is, a special constabulary, as at Marseilles. "At eight o'clock in the morning I was master of Aix. I went about everywhere. I harangued, and was obeyed as a father. . . . By one or two there was not the least sign of trouble. . . . On March 25th, when the people were fired on, they said, 'Ah! if M. de Mirabeau were here, he would give us justice and would not kill us;' I weep as I write these words. Men, women, and children watered my hands, feet, and clothes with tears, and called me their God and their salvation." He went on to say how, when all was quiet, the *noblesse,* who had been hiding, terrified, for thirty-six hours, came out "armed and insolent

. . . and crying, 'It is Mirabeau who has done all this harm!' . . . A strange logic that, of hatred."

The riot in Aix had been worse than the riot in Marseilles, but it was more effectually quieted.

Marseilles, indeed, was already a roaring torrent of revolution, and even a Mirabeau could only dam the stream for a moment. On the morning of March 26th the wall of the city had been placarded with his *Advice to the People of Marseilles* (*Avis au Peuple Marseillais*), in which he reasoned with them as a father, soothed, persuaded, reassured. Loménie speaks of it as "a little masterpiece of familiar eloquence," and, indeed, to read it is to understand why Mirabeau was loved. But the lull he obtained, though real, was brief, and costly to himself. His moderation alienated from him the more violent of the people: his creation of the special constabulary had offended the authorities.

A week later, between April 3d and 9th, came the election of the deputies at both Aix and Marseilles.

At Aix, Mirabeau was returned head of the poll by a majority of one hundred and fifty-four. At Marseilles, he came fourth and last on the list, and was only elected at all, says Demandolx, by the threats and the menacing of his dear "jeunes gens," his *bourgeois* constabulary.

Under the circumstances, he thought it politic to ride yet once again into Marseilles, and thank the electors for his election. At night, when he took leave of them for Paris, four hundred of his mounted constables surrounded his carriage, and, forming a torchlight procession (which was swelled by many vehicles and "vast crowds on foot"), rode with him

to Aix, where hundreds more enthusiasts poured into the midnight streets to greet him and wish him a loud God-speed.

Elected deputy then for both Aix and Marseilles, but proposing to sit in the States-General as the representative of his own city—at the summit of one great ambition and in sight and touch of others, far greater and broader—Mirabeau came to Paris.

CHAPTER XVII

MIRABEAU AT THE STATES-GENERAL

LORD ACTON, in his *Lectures on Modern History,* has finely called the years which followed the Seven Years' War "the age . . . of the Repentance of Monarchy."

It was not till the spring of 1789 that France saw the firstfruits of that repentance, and at last heard the summons for the governed to take part in the government. Five millions of her people had been called upon to choose their representatives in the first great Parliament of the nation, and by the end of April Paris and Versailles were full of the chosen. Eager, keen-witted, inexperienced—these, perhaps, were the dominant characteristics of most of them. Agog to begin, on the very tiptoe of excitement, yet lacking a leader and a plan, they were only raw troops, unofficered, until General Mirabeau rode into their camp, with his fighting career behind him; with reports of peaceful Aix and pacified Marseilles following him from the south, with a plan for the coming campaign in his pocket, and in his soul the instincts of leadership and command.

By now, Mirabeau may be said to have drawn up, elaborated, and finished that political creed which was ever after the basis of his practice.

He was now, as he had ever been, and would be, the devoted lover of freedom which was not licence, and the "implacable enemy" of privileges and abuses. The fierceness of the indignation which had inspired his pen to denounce the gross injustice of *lettres de cachet* in Vincennes, time had not softened: the hatred of despotism which had burnt in his blood when in the haste and fever of his youth he wrote his famous Essay, burnt still. But in the later Mirabeau had grown a wise horror of the despotism of the many as well as of the despotism of the one: and the man who loved the people as a father, loved them as the father of children who need discipline and control.

For his own country, the first article of his creed was a belief in monarchy. For a great new land, such as the United States, the government which she had just given herself would have rather been his ideal. He had no abstract faith in "the right divine of kings to govern wrong." But for an old land of monarchical tradition such as France, he considered Throne and King infinitely better suited than the republic of a Lafayette's dreams. France, he often said, is "geographically monarchical." True, he desired a monarch who should be—as Voltaire had described the English sovereign—powerful to do good, but "with his hands tied from doing evil": but he desired, too, for that monarch the right of veto over his Acts of Parliament, knowing very well, from the study of English history, that if he used that veto too freely he would be expelled from the throne. Mirabeau, in fact, wished, as his adopted son put it, a representative government—"liberty under the bridle of the law, equality before the law, despotism

of the law—monarchical power subject to the law." He wanted, as he put it himself, "to cure Frenchmen from the superstition of monarchy, and to substitute its religion."

In spite of the monarch with whom he had to deal —in spite of the outbursts of rage, which the ineptitude and the folly of that monarch stung from him—he remained for ever, in his own phrase, "very monarchical."

He conceived the Revolution, and himself the head of the Revolution, as a means to repair, not to demolish: to reform, not to overturn. "Pigmies can destroy," said he, "but it needs a great man to build." As to his own order, for all his ridiculous, overbearing, boyish love of his title and the respect it brought him, there was never a noble who estimated so soundly and accurately the harm the *noblesse* had done to France as the Comte de Mirabeau. For a House of Lords, as in England, he had never, as has been seen, any desire. "Nobility, say the nobles, is the intermediary between the King and the people. Yes! as the sporting dog is the intermediary between the sportsman and the hare."

Mirabeau's ideal government for France was a monarchy limited by one great governing assembly, deliberating together, elected by the people from all classes of the community impartially.

But if there was one article in his creed which at this particular moment had a special prominence, it was his belief that on the liberty of the press hung all other liberties. He immediately perceived the value, nay, the necessity, to the deputies of the Third of an organ of their own. To have asked leave to publish

its own newspaper, would have been to court certain refusal. To take, not to ask, was Gabriel-Honoré's way.

By the beginning of May he had launched on Paris the prospectus of a journal, *The Journal of the States-General* (*Le Journal des États-Généraux*), which was to voice the opinion of Mirabeau, to mould and form the opinion of his fellow-deputies—and, when need came, to defy it.

On May 2d, the deputies of the Third were formally presented to his Majesty Louis XVI, at Versailles. The first number of the *États-Généraux* did not forget to record certain slights and insults the representatives of the people suffered on the occasion from the Court flunkeys. But, after all, May 2d was nothing: or nothing but an eve and a vigil.

Monday, May 4, 1789, stands for ever among the great days of history—nay, among the very greatest. Even June 18, 1815, did not bear in her breast consequences so momentous and so far-reaching as that spring day of sunshine at Versailles. "The baptism day of democracy . . . the extreme-unction day of feudalism," Carlyle called it. As the hour when democracy first realised not only its rights, but its might, the results of May 4th are still surely at work in every civilised nation, and the great social forces which then first learnt their power to shake the world are still acting on the lesson taught them that day.

Versailles was crammed literally from garret to cellar—"a very sea of men."

From early in the morning banners and flags were waving and music playing. Many people had come to rejoice in the happy significance that day should

have for them and for their children, and many simply to rejoice in the rejoicings. The balconies and the roofs of the houses were black with spectators, awaiting a pageant. At one window, in the main street of Versailles, sat together Necker's daughter, Madame de Staël, and the wife of Mirabeau's foe, the minister, Montmorin. The one woman rejoiced with an exultant joy over the Millennium—the El Dorado this thing should bring to France; and the other foresaw "fearful disasters" it would entail upon their country and themselves.

Both paid for that day in costly coin—the one by exile, and the other by death. How many more were there among that crowd who paid likewise!

The scene opened by the assembling of the deputies in the church of Notre Dame, which stands in the Boulevard de la Reine. From thence a procession of not less than fourteen hundred men walked through the gala streets to the church of St. Louis, still to be seen in the Rue Satory.

First came the six hundred deputies of the people, sombre in their garb of black and white—"a plain black cloak and white cravat, black coats and waistcoats, knee-breeches and stockings." The crowd greeted them with loud bursts of enthusiasm. Among them were some faces they knew: and many more they were to know—well.

Here, aged only thirty, deputy for Arras, an obscure *avocat* of that town, and one of the three hundred and seventy-four men of law among the Third, walked Maximilien Robespierre. "That man will go far," said Mirabeau; "he believes every word he says."

Here came Pétion, another lawyer, with a fate and fame before him only less dramatic than Robespierre's; there, Bailly, one of the twenty deputies of Paris, astronomer and *littérateur;* here, again, young, vehement, blue-eyed, with a mouth almost as golden as Mirabeau's, Barnave, who was to live to pity the royalty he had worked to ruin: and here, Malouet and Mounier, temperate and temporising.

Five years more, and every one of these six, having this day sown the wind, had reaped the whirlwind, in exile or in violent deaths.

Just after the Third, well ahead of his own order, as if he would fain enter theirs, came Orléans, Prince of the Blood, traitor to both parties, of small, flippant wit and mean cunning—"ayant tous les vices qui font haïr les crimes," says a royalist historian. His position gained him the round of applause he wanted. After him walked the nobility, in the splendid robes and jewels of their order; among them the Comte de la Marck, deputy for Quesnoy, in Flanders; the Marquis de Lafayette, vain and pure—a character always effective, honourable, disinterested, and inadequate; and, with his barrel of a figure, André-Boniface-Louis, Vicomte de Mirabeau, deputy for the *noblesse* of his mother's estates in Haut-Limousin.

Among the clergy, magnificent in their rich vestments, there stepped, or limped, another acquaintance of Mirabeau's—his reverence of Autun. Nobility and clergy had been received silently enough. But when royalty came insulting cheers of "Vive d'Orléans!" were raised to greet the Queen. At home, her eldest child, the first Dauphin, was dying;

at her side walked Madame de Lamballa, for whose sake she had enraged public opinion by reviving the post of Superintendent of the Household, with its inordinate emoluments; only a few months back in her Majesty's past was the well-remembered story of the Diamond Necklace. With her proud head held high to meet it, Marie-Antoinette had already entered upon her heritage of suffering.

Walking with his master, Necker—"that pigmy of the Revolution," "the clock that always loses"—the epithets are Mirabeau's—was received with warm enthusiasm. He was still the idol of the people—not yet tried in the furnace, and there proved but perishable metal after all.

His Majesty received a full share of *vivats*. He had made this day possible. Eye-witnesses record that his broad and honest fact beamed with simple *bonhomie* and satisfaction.

But of that procession he was no more King and Master than he was of the stupendous events it made possible.

There was another ruler that day, among the Third Estate, for whom every eye searched—many with "horror and terror," some few with sympathy, but all in anticipation. With his eyes inflamed with ophthalmia, recently attacked by a jaundice from which he had not had the leisure to recover, with his great Samson head of black hair tricked out till it looked twice its usual monstrous size, his corpulent figure in the black and white dress of the representatives of the people—a personality breathing power and defiance, already claiming and deserving one of the aptest of the many titles applied to him—"the

Hercules of the Revolution"—strode Gabriel-Honoré de Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau.

"He came to the States-General," says the Marquis de Ferrières, "preceded by the fame of great talents and greater vices . . . dominated at once by all the passions, even the most contrary, by an ardent and restless genius; greedy of pleasures, of excitements, of intrigues . . . audacious, enterprising, capable of anything . . ." "You could but look long at this man when you had looked once," said Madame de Staël, watching him from her window.

Look again, Necker's daughter. On that May 4th, Mirabeau mounted the box of the chariot of the Revolution, with its young fiery horses, just set free from restraint, their blood up and their tempers spoilt by long ill-usage, gathered the reins in his great hands, swept off from the swaying vehicle such feeble whips as a Necker and a Montmorin, and held it, not steady, but at least straight on its way, for the first desperate plunge.

With the cheering and the enthusiasm that were not for Mirabeau, in the streaming sunshine, and through the holiday crowds, the whole cavalcade reached the church of St. Louis, where Mass was celebrated, and the Bishop of Nancy, in his sermon, hopelessly missed, said the candid and disapproving voice of the *États-Généraux,* a golden opportunity. The air of that time was, to be sure, full of such lost chances: and the greatness of the occasion found out the littleness of men.

The next day, May 5th, in the Salle des Menus Plaisirs, at the corner of the Rue Saint-Martin in the Avenue de Paris, in the great hall which would

accommodate five thousand persons, the King convened the first séance of the three orders. Through confusion and Court etiquette, it was two hours before the deputies of the Third were all seated. As they came in, the spectators applauded their favourites. When the member for Aix-en-Provence made his entry, some hands, wrote Grimm the journalist, were raised to clap him, but they were stopped by "murmurs whose personal significance did not escape the sagacity of the Comte de Mirabeau."

Governor Morris, an eye-witness, wrote more simply that Mirabeau "was hissed, but not loudly." It was Governor Morris who gave an account of the magnificence of the scene to his wife—of the raised velvet daïs with the throne on it on which sat the King and the Queen, the Princes and the Princesses of the Blood being to the right of them; to the left, the officers of the household and the guards "in their ancient costumes, taken from the times of chivalry"; in front of the throne below the daïs, the ministers of state, and the three hundred representatives of the clergy in their vestments of "scarlet and crimson, black, white, and grey." On the opposite side of the hall, sat the Marshals of France and the representatives of the *noblesse,* and "on benches which reached right across the hall" and faced the daïs, the Third Estate.

The King read his speech; and then came the event of the day, on which were fixed many liberal hopes—the speech of Necker. It lasted three hours —most of it was read, indifferently well, by Necker's clerk. It was certainly a remarkable, and even an able, speech, in what, in face of the conditions in

which it was uttered, it managed to leave out. It contained no mention of reform, or of the misery everywhere in the country, "not a principle, not a plan, not a scheme," and only skimmed the great vital question of the hour, which was agitating every deputy in the place: Were the three estates to sit and deliberate together—a great National Assembly —or were they to remain separate, and deliberate by order?

With what haughty impatience the great practical genius of the member for Aix heard those three hours of "trivialities said pompously" appeared very plainly in the *États-Généraux* the next morning. "If that man," said Gabriel-Honoré to a friend, with a yet sharper exasperation than he could put into print, "had any strength of character he could play the part of a Richelieu. If there was a spark of capacity among the King's advisers, the King would declare himself on the side of the Commons." But all the capacity was with one who was so little the King's adviser that, forewarned that Mirabeau had prepared a speech to make after Necker's in vehement argument that the vote should be taken by numbers (which would secure the Third a great majority), directly Necker had done, his Majesty got on his feet and, with the *noblesse,* left at once.

If Louis XVI. can be credited with anything that can fairly be called a policy, that policy certainly was always to run away or to yield.

On May 6th, the three orders were commanded to assemble at 9 A.M. in the Salle des Menus. Only the deputies of the Third obeyed. The nobles and clergy sat scornfully apart in halls of their own. If the

Third once consented to deliberate alone, they would deliberate alone for ever—a private meeting, without power to carry their measures. Malouet suggested a deputation should be sent asking the nobles and clergy to join them.

That day Mirabeau uttered not a word.

It was on May 7th that he raised for the first time in the presence of his fellow-deputies, the "lion voice" which was to lead and rule them.

People who have in their mind's eye only modern parliaments—even at their noisiest and least decorous—hardly realise, perhaps, the condition of the first Parliament of France.

The Salle des Menus was so huge that, said Arthur Young, only the most powerful lungs and the most stentorian tones could have gained a proper hearing, even had the assembly been orderly. But there was no kind of order. "Although our hall was closed to the public," said Bailly helplessly (he was President of the Third in the early days of June), "there were always more than six hundred spectators," who walked about and talked among themselves, and hissed or applauded the speeches as they felt inclined. Among the deputies there were, as Mirabeau put it, "none with any authority, none feeling themselves under any obligation to obey, and all, like true Frenchmen, wishing to be heard before they would listen." Arthur Young declared that he had seen as many as a hundred members on their legs at once, shouting one another down. Of Bailly's pleas for rule and decorum, and the tinkle of Bailly's little bell, no one took the slightest notice. The scene in the Salle des Menus was, in fact, more like

a particularly obstreperous political meeting, uncontrolled by the police, than anything else.

If ever assembly called out for a leader, it was this one. No Parliament in the world had ever before it work so great and so urgent, and its internal disorganisation bade fair, not only to prevent any work being done, but to imperil its own existence. There was in that gathering only one man who could lead it, and if the gathering was unanimous in anything, it was in hatred or mistrust of that leader.

Dumont, speaking of these infant days of the assembly, declares that Mirabeau was "embittered with everybody." The Third had indeed few men of rigid virtue or severe principle, but Mirabeau's burning past made even the nominally respectable draw back their garments lest his touch should sear them. The story of the *Secret History* was still to the fore in men's mouths and memories. Mirabeau's character had begun to be, what it never ceased to be, "a dead weight" upon his genius. To be sure, as yet he did not fully recognise what a millstone to drag down his usefulness and his talents his sins would be. But the species of ostracism to which his companions treated him drew from him already "bursts of rage and rhodomontades about vengeance." Dumont said he "easily detected in them a note of sorrow" as well, "and saw tears of bitterness in the Count's inflamed eyes." His fellow-deputies had hissed him when he took his seat among them. Now, when he rose to speak, loud murmurs drowned his voice.

Yet there was so much to do that no man but he could do, and so little time to do it! On May 7th,

in spite of the hostility of his audience, he first urged on it that policy as to the reunion of the three orders, which became the policy of the Third for the next six weeks, and by which they eventually won the day.

Do nothing! Remember "the omnipotence of inertia"—that, as I said in Provence, "the most innocent as well as the most invincible of powers is the power of refusing to act." Refuse to act unless the other orders join you, and so compel them to come in. If you vote with them, you must by your numbers out-vote them, and thus the nation will be really represented and will really rule its own destinies. Your strength, then, is to sit still!

To be sure, Mirabeau's attitude to the question made, as he himself wrote to Major Mauvillon, "the privileged orders say it is my insidious and fatal eloquence which excites the Commons, while in the Commons they say that by too much zeal I shall harm the public welfare."

But if he was a leader they hated, he was one they must needs follow. On the very day of that first speech, the government, by a decree of council, suppressed his *Journal of the States-General.* Without the slightest hesitation, Mirabeau produced the next number of the paper exactly as usual, only under the new, shrewd title of *Letters of the Comte de Mirabeau to his Constituents* (*Lettres du Comte de Mirabeau à ses Commettants*), which placed the authorities in the untenable position of refusing to allow a member to address his electors, or of practically acquiescing in the freedom of the press. They acquiesced. Mirabeau, says the historian Lacretelle, seized that freedom "from an intimidated gov-

ernment . . . before the taking of the Bastille: which sufficiently explains the taking of the Bastille and the entire Revolution."

Throughout May, the Commons continued to follow his counsel of masterly inactivity.

On May 18th, Mirabeau, in a speech, short, shrewd, and bold, attempted to "divide the enemy." Many of the clergy—especially the poor curés—are with us—in spirit. Let us then elect commissioners to confer with the clergy as a body to win them over to us. As for the nobility, "we, in spite of their scornful pride, have great reason to doubt that they have the monopoly of light and right." Let us therefore leave *them* severely alone—that they may incriminate themselves the more. This plan was not adopted. Commissioners were chosen to confer with clergy, and with nobility as well.

When, on May 28th, the Commons were discussing the rules of their meetings, Mounier, in a long speech, kept on alluding to the *Comte* de Mirabeau, and another deputy, a little in advance of the time, objected to the title. Mirabeau sprang to his feet at once, and retorted vehemently that he despised the title of Count—any one might take it and keep it!—the only title he prized was that of representative of a great province. Certainly, he never missed a dramatic opportunity. His proposition for the better regulation of debates was carried by a large majority.

By now, the nobility had sent in their ultimatum —We will not join you. The clergy, as Lally Tollendal said, were still "awaiting a conqueror before they chose a side."

At the end of this ominous waiting month of May,

Mirabeau sought through the deputy Malouet, who was a friend of both parties, an interview with Necker. "I fear as you do," Mirabeau wrote to Malouet, "horrible commotions . . . you are allied with M. Necker and M. de Montmorin . . . you should know if they have a plan; if it is reasonable, I will defend it."

But the insults of the *Letters to Cerutti* still hurt Necker's pride; and even to save his country he would not risk the infection of Mirabeau's vices. The pair indeed did meet, at eight o'clock one morning at Montmorin's house—Montmorin himself declining to appear. Necker addressed the Count with an icy coldness—"Sir, M. Malouet says you have propositions to make to me. What are they?" Mirabeau, bitterly offended at the tone, answered, "My proposition is to wish you good morning."

The next day, in the Salle des Menus, Mirabeau, passing Malouet, struck one of the deputies' benches angrily with his hand, saying, "Your man is a fool: he will hear more of me."

Yet it was quite characteristic of Mirabeau's disposition that after this interview he always spoke of Necker as a very good sort of man, totally without malice and *finesse:* just as it was characteristic of his simple-minded vanity, when the government followed up the meeting by offering him the embassy of Constantinople (since it would not have him as an ally, and was afraid of him as a foe), to be quite pleased and flattered by the ridiculous proposition, though, of course, his ascendancy among the Third "put him far above it."

On June 1st, Mirabeau, trusting to that ascend-

ancy, and remembering Westminster, laid on the bureau of the Third a digest of the rules of procedure in the English House of Commons, which his friend Romilly had drawn up at his request, hoping that the methods of the staid Mother of Parliaments might be adopted by the young and inexperienced assembly. But, partly because he proposed it, and partly because young senates, like young people, are impatient of the advice and experience of their elders, the Third contemptuously rejected the English method—"We are not English, and we do not want to be taught by England."

A few days later, Mirabeau was chosen one of a deputation to the King, he having himself proposed that such a deputation should be sent, to beg his Majesty that he would urge nobles and clergy to join the Third. But Louis XVI. was always rendered incapable by his character of using the influence given him by his position.

Meanwhile, the Third were growing tired of waiting. The situation began to prey on their nerves. A few curés had indeed already dribbled in; but, as corporate bodies, clergy and nobility still held haughtily aloof.

Directly the Commons met on June 10th, Mirabeau—since he had been received by the King the deputies of democracy had begun to regard him a little more respectfully—got on his feet and pointed out the dangers of further delay. As we will not yield, they must! Then the Abbé Sieyès—"Mahomet," Mirabeau called him—morose, scheming, abstracted, the Abbé Sieyès of the pamphlet, *What is the Third Estate?*, made his first appearance before

that Third with a suggestion. If the other orders will not join us, let us at once constitute ourselves the Parliament of the nation without them! Summon them to come in within an hour; he who does not will be "condemned by default." They were so summoned. "We will think about it" was the answer from both bodies. The Third took their decision.

On June 13th, 15th, 16th, and 17th, there raged a fierce debate, "without time to breathe," said Mirabeau, on the name the representatives of the people were to bear as the great governing body of their country. "What 's in a name?" did not at all apply here. There was everything in a name; and the rose would by no means smell as sweet in the nostrils of France by one appellation as by another.

On June 15th, the Abbé Sieyès, Mounier, and Mirabeau each suggested a title; and on the next day defended their suggestions.

When the deputy for Aix rose to prove the merits of his own proposition and to attack that of Sieyès, his adopted son declares he was "very suffering and ill," and he wrote of himself to Mauvillon as "ballasted with fever and shivering fits" throughout his speech. But the man's great mind triumphed now, as it was to triumph often in the days to come, alike over turbulent body and hostile audience.

He objected to the long-winded title suggested by Sieyès, "The Assembly of Representatives known and verified by the French Nation," as "incomplete, unintelligible, presumptuous,"—presumptuous in that the word "nation" included the three estates of

society, while the Third only really represented the democracy of France.

Then, with warm eloquence and great power and judiciousness, he defended his own proposed title, "Representatives of the French *People*," explaining that the Third really only did represent the *people*, and then dwelling on the dignity and comprehensiveness of the word always honoured "by those great free peoples, the English and the American"; and quoting Chatham's phrase, "the majesty of the people."

He had been listened to from the first with angry murmurs. He was to-day—as he was to be on many days to come—too moderate and too truthful for his audience. The murmurs swelled to a dull roar, and at last to "a terrible opposition."

Then Sieyès stated that, a name once agreed on by his Commons, there would be no need to take the opinion of the King. In a moment Mirabeau's six feet of height was towering above his audience, and his voice of thunder cowing them into "a sort of terror."

"Sirs, *I* think the King's veto so essential that I had rather live in Constantinople than in France if he did not have it. . . . I know nothing more terrible than the sovereignty of six hundred persons, who to-morrow will constitute themselves a permanent body, the next day hereditary, and will end by usurping everything."

When his hearers had recovered themselves of their fear, they burst into loud storms of invective, and howled him down.

That night, when Mirabeau went home, he read

part of his speech to some young Marseillais: and returned to the Third, with usury, the contempt they had given him. He compared them to wild asses, only endowed by nature with the faculties of kicking and biting. . . . "These fools, whom I despise too much to hate, I shall save in spite of themselves." There spoke the true Mirabeau, the whole Mirabeau, and Mirabeau alone.

On June 17th, the title of "National Assembly," proposed by two obscure deputies, was adopted by a large majority. The National Assembly at once took on itself the right of future taxation and of declaring the existing taxation illegal, announced its intention of dealing with the prevalent misery and famine, and the curtain fell on the first scene of the great revolutionary drama.

One actor, who had been assigned in it but a dull and minor *rôle,* had so filled it that he was already the chief player in the piece, compelling attention, and dimming and dwarfing every other figure on the stage with the glare and the power of his personality.

CHAPTER XVIII

JUNE 23

To be wise after the event is always easy.

But the ineptness and the blundering of royalty and its ministers in the French Revolution were so extreme and glaring as to make one feel as if some curse was on them, as if some malign fate ever brooded above them, to render their opportunities and their friends alike useless or a snare. Yet, on a closer examination, it will be found that here, as everywhere, character was destiny. There is something at once exasperating and pitiable in the hopeless futility of Louis XVI. For both himself and his country, bold bad measures would have been safer and kinder than that weak hesitancy, that feeble opposition or undignified yielding, which made up his policy in this summer of 1789.

The Commons having declared themselves a National Assembly, without Us, and without our *noblesse* and clergy, what are we to do? Majesty and councillors laid their heads together—and, behold, an idea!

On June 20th, a morning of drizzling rain, the royal heralds were loudly proclaiming in the streets of Versailles a Royal Séance for June 22d, and the

deputies, going to their first sitting as the National Parliament, found the doors of the Salle des Menus shut against them, and the hall itself filled with workmen, preparing it for the Séance on the 22d, which makes it, of course, quite unusable!

What must one of those deputies have thought of a King and master who could suppose for a moment that an obstacle so ridiculous could prevent six hundred men, in desperate earnest and with the whole nation at their back, from working the will of that nation? If Mirabeau was not sure already of the feebleness of the monarch who represented the monarchy in which he believed to the end, he was learning the lesson fast.

Then a certain Dr. Guillotin's voice rose above the murmurs and consultations of his fellows with a suggestion which would have made his name famous, if a cunning invention had not, later, made it immortal. "To the Tennis Court!"

In the Rue Saint-François at Versailles may still be seen that building, which was designed for the amusement of princes, and became the instrument for their ruin. A loud, rejoicing, urging, compelling crowd followed the six hundred through the murky morning to that miserable, unfurnished building, which is as famous now as the Field of Runnymede. There was taken the immortal Oath of the Tennis Court, when that great company, standing and with uplifted hands, swore never to separate until the Constitution was formed.

The deputy for Aix pronounced himself in favour of that resolution with such a strong passion of earnestness that every man in those hundreds turned

and looked at him. Dumont says that even his greatest enemies recognised him that day "as an athlete who, in the extremity of the crisis, had become necessary to them."

The news of that crisis reached Paris in a trice—on the wings of the wet summer wind. "The Palais-Royal was in a flame." Court-fed Versailles was with the Third to a man. Paris and Versailles, alike, stood waiting, watching, fearing—every nerve a-quiver, and the heart of a people beating thick.

June 21st was a Sunday. On the 22d, when the deputies went to their meeting at the Tennis Court, that door too was closed upon them. The Comte d'Artois, if you please, *must* have his game! A few workmen and a tennis-playing prince are the only obstacles, it seems, King Louis can set up against his Long Parliament! The deputies went on to the church of St. Louis, where President Bailly read aloud a letter from the King, postponing the Royal Séance until the morrow. Three bishops and a hundred and fifty clergy came in and joined the Commons, and the shouts of applause from deputies and the public resounded through the church.

On that day—as on other days that preceded it—Mirabeau seems to have realised perfectly that his *rôle* was to wait. What lesser men could do, and do well, let them do. Of them, and of the great events that were pushing and overwhelming them, Mirabeau alone had the grip and the control.

On the morning of June 23d, he woke with his six hundred brethren to find Versailles full of troops, and the hall of the States surrounded with them.

When the deputies went for the Royal Séance to

the Salle des Menus, the Commons' door was locked, and they had to wait in the rain, wet, dirty, and humiliated, until the sentinels chose to admit them. It is said that at their ignominious entry nobles and clergy, already assembled, laughed, and applauded ironically. But their entry, after all, was not so ignominious as their master's. Outside, save for the fanfare of trumpets and the beating of the drums—the applause to order—there was not a sound. For the King, who had been greeted with the *vivats* of a nation on May 4th, on June 23d not one man raised a cheer. "The silence of the people is the lesson of kings," said Mirabeau on a later, and a yet greater, occasion. His Commons received his Majesty in the hall in the same manner. Necker was not with him.

The Keeper of the Seals began by reading the Royal Declaration, in which it was stated, We, Majesty, desire there shall be three chambers deliberating separately: that We intend to keep *lettres de cachet* (with a few trifling modifications); and that, as to property, We are the judge of what is property and what is not. On the subject of the Third sharing in the legislative power, that was of so small importance that the Declaration did not drop a hint concerning it; as to the liberty of the press and public lotteries, a few hints only.

Then the King himself spoke. Pleasant generalities, that he wished only the public good and was the father of his people, did not gloss over to some of his hearers the full significance of the pronouncement that, if his Commons would not help him in his enterprises, "seul je ferai le bien de mes peuples." "If," said one of those hearers, recording the scene

in a Letter to his Constituents, "the King's power is absolute . . . why assemble the representatives of the people to carry out his reforms? If he only desires to learn his people's wishes and grievances, they could have sent them by the post."

Then his Majesty broke up the Séance with the parting command that the three orders were to-morrow to meet separately and to deliberate by order; and with another fine fanfare of trumpets, exeunt King, ministers, *noblesse*, and that part of the clergy who had not joined the Third.

To be a great general or statesman, more is required even than to see the right thing to do, and to do it. One must see it and do it at the right moment.

The Commons sat for a few minutes in a "morne silence." The road to take, which seems obvious now, because one master-mind took it, was dark and difficult enough then. Among all the Third—and they held in their midst the facile inspiration of Barnave, the shrewd scheming of Sieyès, and the cunning of Barère—there was only one whose "prescient and dazzling intellect" immediately perceived that if his order obeyed, it obeyed as slaves for ever; that if it yielded now, the resistance of the past six weeks was not only useless, but a farce and a contempt; that the Oath of the Tennis Court would be proven false swearing and a lie, the Revolution be unmade, and the Third stand before the people who had returned, trusted, adored them, traitors and dastards, beaten and flying at the first sound of the enemy's drums.

Mirabeau rose among his fellows, and in a few

temperate words pointed out to them the arbitrary nature of the royal command, and begged them to remember their oath and never to separate till the Constitution was made.

Then the young Marquis de Dreux-Brézé, who was master of the ceremonies (one of his descendants sits in the Chamber of Deputies to-day, a member for republican France), repeated the royal commands to President Bailly: "You have heard the King's intention."

In the spirited bas-relief of this famous scene (now in the Chamber of Deputies) Mirabeau is represented as advancing towards the presidential desk to make his great retort. But in reality, on June 23d, Bailly had no desk, and Mirabeau simply stood up among his fellows, towering above them in mental as in physical height.

"The Commons of France have resolved to deliberate. We have heard the intentions which have been put into the King's mouth: you, sir, can never be his spokesman to the National Assembly: you have neither place, nor voice, nor right of speech. Go and tell your master that we are here by the will of the people, and will only be torn from our places by the force of bayonets."

In a second the whole Assembly was on its feet —shouting its passionate applause and approval. "Such is the will of the Assembly!"

Abbé Sieyès turned to them all. "Sirs, you are to-day what you were yesterday—Délibérons!" "Et l'Assemblée délibéra."

The whole scene took so short a time to enact that King and procession were hardly back at the palace

before the young usher caught them up and breathlessly told how the Third had declined to obey his Majesty's orders, and would by no means leave the Salle des Menus! The poor king of farce could think of no stronger solution of the difficulty than to reply, irritably, "Then let them stay where they are!"

The next day, when Mirabeau was told that the idea of this fatal Séance had originated with his friend Duroveray, he fell, it is said, into "an access of rage." "Duroveray does not think me worthy of being consulted—I know he looks on me as a madman with lucid intervals. . . . It is thus that kings are brought to the scaffold."

Thus—by their advisers. But there never was king who so helped to pave the way to his own ruin as Louis XVI.

As for Mirabeau—he stood forward, on the sudden, the Hampden of his country—"a head to contrive, a tongue to persuade, and a hand to execute." On this day, too, he first took his place beside his idol, Chatham, as the orator, not of the long formal speech or close debate, but of those burning flashes of inspiration which licked up like flame the chaff of folly and incapacity, and, like flame, lit the way across the future.

It must be added that of this famous apostrophe of June 23d there are many differing versions.

President Bailly has one in his Memoirs, and the Marquis de Dreux-Brézé (the son of the usher) another, in his. In 1791, the Jacobin Society had engraved on Mirabeau's statue, by Houdon, the shortest and most popular one: "Go and tell those who

sent you that we are here by the will of the nation, and will only leave at the point of the bayonet."

The one given in Mirabeau's *Thirteenth Letter to his Constituents* has been chosen as the most likely to be right, on the simple grounds that a man ought to know best what he said himself. To the charge that, being Mirabeau, he probably embroidered for publication, and gave, not what he did say, but what he wished he had said—it may be well replied that, in this case one at least gets what he meant. It must be added that in the Letter to his Constituents the words "Go and tell your master" are omitted—purposely, says Lucas de Montigny, who gives them, as in the provinces, where the letters were greatly read, the feeling was so strongly monarchical that Mirabeau feared the phrase might have been objected to as disrespectful to the King.

To prove himself to those constituents the moderate and the monarchist he was, Mirabeau had, indeed, a speedy opportunity.

The next day, when the King was out hunting, as nonchalantly as though, said Arthur Young, it was not "actually a question whether he should be a doge of Venice or a king of France," forty-five nobles, including Orléans and one Beauharnais, married to a creole called Josephine, came over to the Third. Many clergy did likewise. On June 26th, Talleyrand dragged his deformed body and his brilliant wits into the Salle des Menus and the ranks of the popular party. The next day Louis XVI., in the very teeth of his own commands, and "frightened," as the plain-spoken Arthur Young puts it, "into overturning his own act of the Royal Séance," issued

a royal command that the remainder of nobles and clergy should join the Third. The whole Assembly poured out of the hall and, accompanied by a great crowd of people, went shouting its joy to the palace. King and Queen appeared on a balcony, and were cheered to the echo; the noise might have been heard, it is said, at Marly.

On this very day of enthusiasm, and on June 30th, Mirabeau rose in the Assembly and proposed that it should issue an address to the nation, counselling to it moderation and good behaviour.

Since May 4th, Paris had passed from paroxysms of joy and delight to paroxysms of rage and threatening, and then back again from one to the other, according as events shaped themselves at Versailles. The Palais-Royal—"the centre of prostitution, of play, of idleness, and of pamphlets"—was night and day full of a surging, eager crowd—flaming orators mounting the chairs and tables of its coffee-houses and shouting curses on the King who would deny them their liberties, and the next hour blessings on him that he would grant them. Pamphlets—nearly all seditious and against the ministry—fell red-hot from the printing-presses all day long. From the Faubourg Saint-Antoine came the dull roar of desperation: famine was fast turning men into beasts. In all quarters were unrest, fever, excitement—every one looking for a leader and knowing not where to find him. One day the Palais-Royal turned towards Orléans, and the next it had veered back to the King. Then there was in all mouths—with a curse, or a blessing, or a hope—but in the mouths of all the talkers and the listeners alike, another name—Mira-

beau, Mirabeau, Mirabeau. The Séance of June 23d raised a howl of disgust for Mirabeau's master, and a boom of applause for Mirabeau, and on June 27th behold Paris shouting *vivats* for them both!

It is said that even the iron nerve of Napoleon Bonaparte feared one thing—mob-rule. He who has been well described as "the only really great leader," before Napoleon, which the Revolution knew, feared it too.

"Our fate depends on our wisdom, nothing but violence can peril our liberties." This was the motto of his speeches on June 27th and 30th. Gently, gently, go softly! One can feel the strong hands on the reins, and hear the great voice of the driver softened to soothe and persuade. If the team had been restive at the first plunge, how much more now, with the new wine of success in its tossing heads! Steady, steady! "Resentment mends nothing" was an old axiom of the least resentful of human beings. He dared now to remind his friends in the Assembly that when the King does good, he alone is responsible: and when he does ill, his ministers. As for the newcomers who listened to the speaker, *they* remembered his great apostrophe of the 23d: and both parties received him in silence.

With one of those newcomers, Mirabeau was fast passing from acquaintanceship to an intimacy pregnant with great issues.

A few days after the union of the three orders, the great leader of the Third was dining in very amicable fashion with the charming and cultivated member of Quesnoy, the friend of the Court and the Queen. If the Comte de la Marck found much in-

deed to forgive in Mirabeau's manners and methods, he was wise enough to recognise from the first the value—nay, the necessity—of such an ability to the royal cause. He was himself as sincerely attached to liberty as he was attached to the person of Marie-Antoinette, and soon to that of Mirabeau also.

The story runs how, at this *tête-à-tête* dinner, Mirabeau's sensitive vanity, perceiving a certain coolness in his host, inquired, "You are displeased with me?" "With you and many others." "Begin your displeasure," answered Mirabeau, "with the people at the palace." Later, he added, "The words liberty, taxation by the will of the people, have resounded through the kingdom. We shall not emerge from this without a government more or less like that of England. . . . The time is come when men will be valued by what they have in this little space"—and he touched his forehead between the eyebrows.

A few days later, he was dining again with La Marck. This time, the Duc de Lauzun and several others were present, and Mirabeau expressed his opinions with such violence that La Marck, who was always admirably calm and judicious, begged a little more discretion. As he was leaving, Mirabeau whispered to the Count, "Tell them at the palace I am nevertheless more for them than against them."

To be sure, they needed not only his friendship but his counsel.

In these early days of July, while the united Assembly was settling into place, doing its best—its untried best—to promote peace, and to deal with the riots, famines, and incendiarisms of which news poured in daily from the provinces, the King's ad-

visers, with what, under the circumstances, can only be called an inconceivable idiocy, continued to flood Versailles with troops, mostly foreign mercenaries, so that the place looked as if it were in a state of siege. If Mirabeau's superb self-confidence had left much room in his nature for such a feeling as despair, he would have felt it with royalty now, as he did feel it later. His master held only two strong cards in his hand—popularity and force. The one he always threw away; the other he only played when it was either useless or harmful.

Mirabeau was lodging at this time in very small rooms in the Rue de l'Orangerie. A woman, with whom he lived now in one of those brief, deplorable intimacies too fatally common in his career, says that he every day expected to be arrested. He thought, as many thought, the soldiery (who not only lined the streets, but were actually stationed inside the Salle des Menus as well) had in view the seizing of certain deputies; and if any deputies, undoubtedly the deputy for Aix-en-Provence! But if he expected such a contingency, he did not fear it. In the face of his country's dilemma and of the mad recklessness of royalty, for his own personal safety he seems to have felt something very like contempt. Nothing was of moment now, but that these troops must be removed! They might arrest deputies, or they might not. But they were eating up the bread of the honest townspeople of Versailles, and provoking an irritation against royalty—which would stop—when? where? who should say? Mirabeau recognised that the situation demanded of him, if ever situation did, action, instant, judicious, and strong.

In the Salle des Menus, on July 8th, he proposed that an Address should be presented to the King, asking him to remove the soldiery from the town, as being useless, because, said the speaker, the King's subjects are orderly and faithful; fatal to the King's prestige, because it shows him as a despot instead of a "dear and rightful lord"; and harmful to the miserable townspeople, who have not enough food for themselves. "Have the advisers of such a measure read in the history of nations how revolutions have begun?"

In the place of the soldiery, remembering his dear *jeunes gens* of Marseilles, he proposed that the King should institute a *bourgeois* militia, such as he had himself found so serviceable.

This suggestion—though it afterwards took effect in the formation of the National Guard—was then rejected by the Assembly. But it voted, with only four dissentient voices, that the petition should be presented to the King.

Mirabeau went back to his lodging. By the next day, July 9th, he had written that Address. He was chosen—he had to be chosen—one of the deputation to present it to his Majesty. Towering above the others—among them were Abbé Grégoire, Robespierre, Pétion, Barère, and the Comte de Clermont-Tonnerre who read the Address—massive, gloomy, repellent, and yet with that compelling sympathy in him to which even hostile royalty must succumb at last—it was, it is said, on Mirabeau alone that the King's eyes were fixed. It was Mirabeau alone who could have written that Address. "Too many threats for so much love, and too much love for so

many threats," Rivarol criticises it. Yes! But that *was* Mirabeau. In its wrath and its tenderness, in its pitying patience and its passionate energy, in its natural vehemence and its cultivated moderation, there speaks something of the best and most characteristic not only of Mirabeau's intellect but of his character.

"The danger, sire, is pressing, universal, and above all the calculations of human prudence. The danger is for the people in the provinces . . . once they fear for our liberty (the liberty of the National Assembly) we know no bridle which can restrain them. . . . The danger is for Paris. How will a starving and anxious people behold the bread they have left them, disputed by a crowd of soldiers? The danger is for the soldiers themselves . . . who will forget the vows that made them soldiers to remember that Nature made them men . . . The danger menaces commerce . . . and the throne. Great revolutions have sprung from causes less startling; many an enterprise, fatal to nations and kings, has begun in a fashion less sinister and formidable. . . . Sire, we implore you, in the name of your country, of your glory, and of your happiness, send back your soldiers from the posts to which your advisers have called them. . . . Above all, send away the foreign troops, allies whom we pay to defend, not to trouble, our homes. Your Majesty does not need them. Why should a sovereign, beloved of twenty-five millions of Frenchmen, gather round his throne strangers and foreigners? Sire, in the midst of your children, trust to the protection of their love."

CHAPTER XIX

MIRABEAU AND THE FALL OF THE BASTILLE

Among the many accusations the old Marquis of Mirabeau brought against his elder son was that of plagiarism. "What he says is false, what he does visionary, and what he writes stolen." The parent added that this dishonesty was the more regrettable as Gabriel-Honoré was a very "poor thief."

Sophie de Monnier, writing to her lover in Vincennes, had tenderly reproached him with appropriating other people's anecdotes.

The matter for his pamphlets on Stock-jobbing he derived, as has been seen, from Clavière and Panchaud. To Major Mauvillon's generous help he owed, and continually acknowledged that he owed, much of the substance and statistics used in his book on the *Prussian Monarchy*.

Now, as a statesman, he drew material for his speeches on legal questions from Duroveray; on Church questions from a certain Abbé Lamourette; while Reybaz, a Genevese publicist and critic, supplied him with the pabulum of his financial speeches. The devoted Comps wrote his letters from brief, and exceedingly hieroglyphic notes, which his master flung to him. After September, 1789, a young man called

Pellenc, lived in Mirabeau's house and became the most useful of his collaborators, especially in work particularly requiring analysis and logic. Frochot, a young enthusiastic Burgundian deputy, did, after October, 1789, for Mirabeau at the Assembly what the Comte de la Marck did for him at the Court.

But the most useful, and the most celebrated, of all his helpers was Étienne Dumont. With far more mother-wit and talent than any other of Mirabeau's aides-de-camp, with a charming literary style of his own, it is not only possible that Dumont did occasionally supply his master with ideas and phrases as well as information, but perfectly natural that he should have coveted an original genius on his own account. It is Dumont alone who claims to have been, not Mirabeau's helper, but Mirabeau himself; not merely the pen and instrument, but the writer; and who, because he generously supplied the artist with palette, brush, and paints, demands the credit of the picture.

It is Dumont—in those Memoirs which, it must be remembered, were published after his death, and were never corrected by him—who claims to have actually conceived and written certain speeches which Mirabeau delivered as his own. The speech on the Name of the Assembly was one. Of this *Address to the King,* of July 9th, Dumont writes that he (Dumont) wrote it " with great fulness and quickness " between one sitting and another; of a later speech, delivered in January, 1791, the *Report on Foreign Affairs,* he claims the entire authorship of the paragraphs relating to England.

To be sure, the refutation of these assumptions is

not difficult. It must be conceded at once that Mirabeau *was* a plagiarist. He took much: sometimes generously acknowledging what he took; sometimes, in the ardour of the great game he was playing, forgetting to make any acknowledgments; and sometimes utterly and honestly forgetting there were any acknowledgments to be made and that the thing was not his own. He took with consummate skill. "Il en est pour les choses littéraires comme pour les choses d'argent: on ne prête qu'aux riches," says Fournier. That was Mirabeau's view. The works of others were as a public gold-mine—free to the most skilful miner.

As he took from the dead, so he took from the living. His friends and secretaries were his living books, his reference libraries. Their labour saved him the dull statistical work for which he had neither patience nor time. They gave him the erudition he had forgotten, the correctness he lacked. Their diligence made possible the enormous quantity, as well as some minor virtues of the quality, of his mental output.

But that was all. To Mirabeau belonged, in the first place, in a supreme degree, the art of getting their best work out of his helpers. "Il fait travailler." He discovered their talents, and used them. He, of whom Dumont himself said that unless he had lived with him he would never have known what a man could do in a day, had mastered the secret of hard work for others as well as for himself.

If it was occasionally literally true that he went to the Assembly with a speech written by some one else —a speech whose technical details he had scarcely

mastered before he mounted the tribune—yet, even in these extreme cases, the speech was Mirabeau's own. For it was he who turned it, with a single touch of the wizard wand of his genius, into a masterpiece of persuasive oratory; it was he who gave the dull matter life and breath; or who ended the conscientious mediocrity of a Pellenc or a Frochot with one of those inspired apostrophes which changed the vote of the Assembly and the course of the Revolution.

Besides, if Dumont and his peers could have been themselves Mirabeau, they would have been. Did a quixotic loyalty and generosity to their master stay them during his lifetime? Into the aching void left by his death not one of them stepped. No great man ever died and left behind a more crying need of a successor. But only one of his aides-de-camp, Pellenc, even attempted to carry on his work, and the few "Notes" he wrote for the Court were an entire failure. Nor can it be said that it was only the splendid thunders of Mirabeau's voice, the loud magic-music of oratory, which his friends missed, and so missing, missed all. The cold, mean presence of Robespierre, the awkward phrases of Sieyès, did not prevent *them* being heard and followed.

No! If there is anything proven about Mirabeau, it is the originality of his genius; and that he did not borrow the broad sagacity, the massive energy, and the marvellous gift of prophecy which make his speeches unique, is proven by the fact that there was no man who could lend them to him.

Of this particular *Address to the King* it may be observed that the writing of the original manuscript, now in the National Archives in Paris, though

there are corrections on it in the hands of Dumont and others, is Mirabeau's own.

The King returned to the Address a vague, maddening answer on July 11th. The troops are there for Our good-will and pleasure and the public safety, and the Assembly can go and sit at Soissons or Noyon if it prefers! The writer of the Address called the Assembly to quick, energetic refusal of such a fatal measure. "We have not asked permission to run away from the troops, but that the troops should be removed from the capital. . . . There is only one thing for us to do—to insist unremittingly."

Then, while Paris was seething in rage and terror, while at the unhappy Queen's command the Maréchal de Broglie was concentrating upon the capital more troops, and more again, until the Champ de Mars had become a vast camp of foreign mercenaries, while the King was prosecuting that measure which goaded his people past endurance at last, the dismissal of their favourite, Necker—Mirabeau, the only man who could command events so swift and fearful, was called away by a voice louder even than that of his public duty.

On July 11th, at midday, the old Marquis de Mirabeau died, aged seventy-three, at his house "Le Petit Marly" at Argenteuil, as he was sitting by the open window, in the summer sunshine, while Caroline du Saillant read aloud to him. She and her children had been much with him in these last months. That Vivien, Madame de Pailly, had come often to Argenteuil, lest her old Merlin should die in peace. His wife was still in her convent. Tonneau's bride, the Vicomtesse, had gratified her father-

in-law's *postéromanie* by presenting her husband with a son.

But it was hardly to Tonneau, though he left him his heir and residuary legatee, that the old man's thoughts turned in these latter days. Could the eyes of all France be fixed on Gabriel-Honoré and not his father's? Among all that was deplorable and wretched in their mutual relationship, the story of the two great Mirabeau has been ill-told indeed, if it has not been shown that, through all, the pair, somehow, *did* care deeply for each other, and loved scarcely less thoroughly than they fought.

All through the crowded spring of 1789 Gabriel-Honoré had often made time to go out to Argenteuil to see his father: nay, he had helped him with the publication of his last work, *Le Rêve d'un Goutteux,* and written many letters on the subject of it, although at the time his own correspondence was so enormous that a week's bill for it came to a thousand francs. (To be sure, he did not discharge this little account. He simply wrote at the bottom of it that he had received it, "and I promise not to pay a farthing of it." The Intendant-General of the Post gave this remarkable document to the King, and ever after Mirabeau received his letters free.)

At Argenteuil, he had not only curbed his impatience to correct proofs, but had sat and listened, with what meekness he could muster, to strictures on his political conduct from a Friend of Men who, despite that work, was certainly one of the most stiff-necked old Tories who ever breathed. It is pleasant to think that the son's broad, comprehending sympathy must have helped him to see then, as

it is easy to see now, the father's pride in his boy's power and genius trembling through his wrath and laments on the dreadful radicalism of Gabriel's principles and speeches. It is permissible to hope, too, that Gabriel knew that when Tonneau showed the Marquis a violent speech against Gabriel's policy, which Tonneau proposed to deliver in the Assembly, the Marquis returned the document to him with the marginal note: "When one has a brother like yours at the States-General, and when one is you, one lets his brother speak and himself keeps silence."

But the old man's haughty spirit was quiet at last, and the rash tongue silenced.

One authority assigns Mirabeau's absence from the Assembly for the next few days to motives of a deep and subtle policy. The truer and simpler solution is that he mourned, with the fierce sincerity and tenderness of his nature, the man who had been to him a bad father, and to whom he had been, too often, a guilty son. To have nothing to forgive in one's dead or in one's own conduct to them, is best; but to be able fully to forgive their failings is something, and remorse for one's own has been beautifully defined as "the echo of a lost virtue."

In his *Nineteenth Letter to his Constituents,* Mirabeau wrote that the Marquis's death had "put in mourning all good citizens of the world"; and to his uncle, "humanity has lost a splendid genius." In the great tribune's will there was found a clause, begging that his father's ashes might be moved so that they could lie side by side with his own.

On July 11th, while Mirabeau was experiencing at Argenteuil the numb strangeness of the early hours

of grief, at Versailles the King had set his hand and seal to the dismissal of Necker, and that fatal news was running through the Assembly with the swiftness of fire on dry bracken, leaving behind it the ashes of blank dismay.

Mirabeau was still at Argenteuil when, on that famous Sunday, July 12th, Camille Desmoulins, the wild and brilliant demagogue, with his eager, stuttering tongue and loose black hair, sprang on a table —" the tripod of the Revolution "—outside the Café de Foy in the Palais-Royal, shouted the tidings of that dismissal to raging Paris, and shrieked mad warnings of a " Bartholomew of patriots " to be committed by the soldiery.

The only man who might have changed and calmed events so stupendous, saw nothing of the madness of the day and night of Monday, July 13th, when sleepless Paris forged pikes—defensive or offensive, as need shall be!—and the Place de Grève was literally piled with firearms. All through that night the Assembly sat at Versailles, as it had sat all day long, in immediate peril of its existence from the soldiery who surrounded it: sending desperate despatches to the King, begging him to dismiss the troops, recall Necker, and establish a civic guard; and with Lafayette—Lafayette believing, as ever, too much in himself and not at all in the magnitude of the situation he was called upon to control—as Vice-President in the room of Bailly.

Mirabeau was still not back in the Assembly when, on the 14th—with a crash like the crash of doom, shaking every throne in Europe, and grinding to powder beneath it that system of arbitrary punish-

ment of which it then stood, and, fallen, stands eternally the supreme type and symbol—came the fall of the Bastille.

Paris, having done the deed, stood back aghast for a moment at its own surpassing daring. Between ten and eleven o'clock at night, the Duc de Liancourt, having galloped from Paris, entered the royal apartments at Versailles and woke the King, heavily asleep after hunting, with that appalling news.

On that same night, to the Assembly—which still sat persistently, lest, if it rose now, it should never sit again, in which some deputies were sleeping, and some were trying to sleep, and many more were feverishly alert with suspense and fear, distraught, doubting, disordered—Mirabeau returned. His seamed face was grey and drawn with suffering. But whatever his heart felt, the mind rose above it. With a grasp of the situation which was clear and quick as it was strong and sound, with a prophetic judgment which neither under- nor over-estimated the importance of the event and his own power to control it, the great commander had come back to his children.

"In a voice hoarse with fatigues, watchings, and anxieties," he supported the suggestion of the Marquis de Sillery that yet another deputation should go to the King, again imploring him to withdraw the troops, who had not even been asked to quell the riots in Paris, and to dismiss his self-chosen ministry, in which Foulon—who stands "damned to everlasting fame" as the man who, when he was told the people had no bread, replied, "Then let them eat grass!"—took the place of Necker. Mirabeau added

that the King's attention should be drawn to the fact that flour was by force prevented entering starving Paris. His words were loudly applauded.

Then for a moment—one of those moments, half inspiration and half rage, which one owes not to the genius of the statesman, but to the human nature of the man—he had turned to the deputation with an outbreak of fire which the mad folly of royalty had a special power to strike from him.

"Tell the King that these foreign hordes . . . received yesterday visits from princes and princesses . . . their flattery and their gifts. Tell him that all night these foreign satellites, drunk with money and wine, predicted the slavery of France in their impious songs . . . and the destruction of the National Assembly. . . . Tell him that Henry, whom among his ancestors he chose as his model, sent food into rebellious Paris . . . while his inhuman ministers turned back the provisions which would feed his loyal and starving capital."

But before the deputation had started, the Duc de Liancourt entered the Salle des Menus with the message that the King, of his own good-will and pleasure, was coming to his faithful Commons in person. True Frenchmen, as quick to kiss and be friends as to strike and be wroth, the House began to applaud. But their leader could be as proud, sober, and self-controlled as an English statesman at his best. He rose again. "A sad respect should be the first reception given to a monarch in the moment of sorrow, for *the silence of the people is the lesson of kings.*"

This phrase, which appears in his *Nineteenth Letter*

to his Constituents as his own, was, perhaps, as some of his biographers have stated, only a quotation from a sermon by the Bishop of Senez. After all, clever invention or only *ben trovato,* it matters little—"on ne prête qu'aux riches."

If yielding because one is afraid to resist deserves applause, the King deserved it then. Dulness of apprehension could not save even Louis XVI. from being very badly frightened at last.

He arrived at the Salle des Menus, with his brothers, and without guards; confided himself, in quite touching terms, to the care of his National Assembly; promised it that the troops should be recalled, and Necker reinstated—in short, gentlemen, anything and everything you like! The weary and grateful Assembly escorted its monarch back to the Château. For the moment there was a lull. The night of the 14th had passed into the day of the 15th. The Bastille had fallen; the world still trembled from that earthquake, and began to consider its portents and its significance.

There are few things the moderates have criticised more severely in Mirabeau's policy than the attitude he takes towards this great event, in his *Nineteenth Letter to his Constituents.* It was of course his misfortune, throughout his political life, to be always too liberal for one side, and not radical enough for the other; so that while he strode, firm and disdainful, in the golden mean, the royalists damned him as a revolutionist, the revolutionists as a royalist, and both parties shrieked "Traitor!"

Now, it was the moderates who fell upon him. The wretch condones murder and bloodshed! It is

true that Mirabeau thought now, as he had thought in Provence, that "when the people complains it has always a reason"—that it never resists until "the last degree of oppression."

What a provocation this people had had! What centuries and ages of it! Well, so bloody a vengeance needs forgiveness, but it deserves it too, and one may surely praise the "virtue and moderation" of a mob which has stopped short so soon!

If this view of Mirabeau's can be fairly taken as a condonation of murder, what of the view of Charles James Fox, who wrote of the taking of the great prison to a friend, "How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world, and how much the best!" The Duke of Dorset, British Ambassador in Paris, wrote home that, considering the importance of the event, there had been "wonderfully little bloodshed"; and Ferrières, the royalist, states that he considered that no protest less vehement would have prevented the troops attacking the National Assembly. In every part of the world the news may be said to have been received with joy, if it was sometimes a trembling and a fearful joy. Few were blind and foolhardy enough to regard the attack as his biographer, Miss Sichel, says that Lafayette regarded it—simply "as a feat of heroism rather mismanaged."

The fall of the Bastille was, indeed, to Mirabeau exactly what it is to almost every impartial modern historian—the revolt, not against punishment, but against unjust punishment—a rebellion, not against lawful authority, but against the grossest abuse of authority the world ever saw. Mirabeau knew that

the mob attacked, not a harmless old gentleman named de Launay, but the Governor of the Bastille; and went out to destroy, not a building, but a system.

It must be remembered, too, that even in this Nineteenth Letter, he lifts his great voice against the tyranny of anarchy, and dared, even in this moment of fervour and triumph, to warn and restrain the victors. "The continuation of mob-rule is as dangerous to the public liberty as the plots of its enemies—in anarchy even a despot is a saviour."

The light and recuperative people immediately made trinkets from the stones of the prison and had a regular depôt for their sale in the Palais-Royal; used the ruins as a promenade and a spectacle; and affixed to some broken column the announcement, "Ici l'on danse."

To Mirabeau's searching and serious eyes this thing was not an end, but a beginning; not the door shut on a shameful past, but the portals opened wide to a noble future, and over them he saw written, "Enter ye in."

While too many of his fellow-deputies thought this one act had achieved all, he went on achieving.

He and Barnave alone seem to have immediately perceived that the King's lavish promises of July 15th had included none concerning the dismissal of the minor members of his new ministry. It was ungracious, surely, to ask for more from a monarch who had already conceded so much! But the hour was too stern to think of such refinements of courtesy. Mirabeau addressed to the Salle des Menus, on July 16th, a speech in which he defended the right of the

Assembly to tell its monarch when the people had no confidence in his ministers, adducing in favour of his argument the example of England. Then, in answer to a voice—Mounier's, it is said, though Mounier denies it—"England is lost"—the speaker turned to the House with a burst of irony: "England is lost! Great God! what sinister news! . . . What earthquake has engulfed this famous island . . . the inexhaustible mother of great examples, the classic land of liberty! . . . Reassure yourselves! England still flourishes, to be an eternal example to the world."

Mirabeau had also prepared an *Address to the King,* urging the fulfilment of his promise to recall Necker, whom Mirabeau loved so little, but whose recall he considered best for his country—though, indeed, bad was the best—and imploring the King, with all his honeyed tongue and tender persuasion, to be himself, and not the tool of his ministers. As the House was voting the presentation of this Address, the Assembly received the news that its requests had been granted, that Necker *was* recalled, and the minor ministers dismissed.

That evening, wiser in their generation than the children of light, the Comte d'Artois, the Princess of Condé and Conti, the Dukes of Bourbon and Enghien, and the hated friend of the Queen, Madame de Polignac, bade farewell to the master they were deserting, and fled the country.

On July 17th, escorted by a hundred deputies, of whom Mirabeau was not one, owing to his mourning for his father, the King made his "pitiful pilgrimage" to Paris. "He who has counselled this

scheme," Mirabeau wrote to Dumont, "is a bold man. Without it, Paris was lost to the King. Two or three days later, he would not have been able to enter it." That day, too, Bailly, the mild and astronomic Bailly, with his head always in the stars, was elected mayor of the capital. "If decency had not prevented my showing myself, through my father's death," Gabriel-Honoré wrote to La Marck with his usual large self-confidence, "I am sure I should have been elected mayor in Bailly's place." With what changes to the history of the Revolution, it were vain to speculate—but with changes wide and momentous, it is impossible to doubt.

The King had been received with enthusiasm during his day's visit to Paris, for he had not yet succeeded in killing his popularity. A few days later, King Mirabeau, to add to *his* popularity—already largely increased by the honest rage of his speech on the Removal of the Troops, and somewhat endangered by his not less honest speech on the Name of the Assembly, and his improvisation on the Veto—made a sort of triumphal progress to the ruins of the Bastille. "The crowd gathered at his approach . . . threw him verses and flowers . . . and filled his carriage with books and manuscripts," taken from the famous prison. When Mirabeau and Dumont (who was with him and tells the story) visited the underground cells, Legrain, Mirabeau's servant, who had been with him since 1781, and was quite devoted to a master equally lavish of kicks and kindness, burst into tears, and implored Dumont not to allow M. le Comte to be murdered.

Of the consolations of both private and public

affection, Mirabeau had certainly at this time no little need.

In his money affairs he had begun to find, as smaller people find, that the surest way of giving oneself a great deal of trouble is never to take any. His father had left him only the settled estates, which were deeply mortgaged, and from which for some time Gabriel-Honoré did not derive a single penny of ready money. "I have not time to see to my private affairs, which would take all my care," he wrote to La Marck. "I am in want of money every day even to pay my lacquey." The generous and public-spirited La Marck began, soon after the Marquis de Mirabeau's death, to lend to Gabriel-Honoré, and proposed to make him a regular allowance of fifty louis a month, which, with his stipend as deputy, would enable him, not indeed to pay his way, because that Gabriel-Honoré never attempted to do, but to subsist so that his talents should not be lost to a country whose salvation hung upon them.

Mirabeau had, indeed, in his possession a gold-mine which he had all the talent, but not the time, the patience, nor, alas! the character, to work satisfactorily.

His *Nineteenth Letter to his Constituents,* which described with imposing eloquence the events from July 9th to 24th, and had an enormous success, announced the establishment of a paper called the *Courrier de Provence,* which was to emanate from the publishing house of Lejay, and to be conducted by Lejay, Mirabeau, Duroveray, and Dumont. A few days after that preliminary advertisement was before the public, three thousand persons had become subscribers. Here, then, was a source of income, rich

and honourable. It was arranged that Lejay was to have a considerable sum for its printing, and a quarter of its profits clear. But Mirabeau, with the lavish and disorderly generosity which characterised him, handed also to Lejay, or, rather, to that "adroit and decided" woman, Lejay's wife, his own share of the profits as well. But that was not all. The Assembly sitting at Versailles, Mirabeau and Dumont had to live there; and so were practically compelled to leave the entire management of the paper in the hands of the Lejays. The man was a timid creature, terrified of his terrible wife. Imperious, rapacious, and clever, she was not quite clever enough to see that honesty is the best policy; or, as Mirabeau said to her one day before Dumont, "if honesty did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it as a means of enriching oneself." She not only falsified the accounts, and furnished her house on the profits, but so mismanaged the business connected with the paper that the subscribers were continually complaining, and the enterprise was finally ruined.

Nothing is more pitiable in Mirabeau's history—with so much in it that is pitiable exceedingly—than his relations to this wretched woman. Knowing that his association with her degraded him, despising himself for it with all the fierce disdain and remorse of which his nature was capable, he yet dared neither to "take a high tone with her" nor to break with her. Perfectly unscrupulous, far past any appeal to her honour or tenderness, "she knew too much." The dishonourable secret of the *Secret History,* revived again and blurted out, might even now ruin Mirabeau, Mirabeau's usefulness to France, and his

Herculean labours for her since the beginning of the year.

He would apologise to his co-operators in the *Courrier de Provence* for not paying them, by declaring bitterly that "it was easier to lead the National Assembly than a woman who had taken his part." "The whole bench," he used to say, "could not convict her. I defy the shrewdest counsel to beat her in subtlety." So Samson, knowing all her wiles and loathing her and himself, went back again and again to be shorn by Delilah.

As to the actual writing of the paper, Dumont, of course, made large personal claims. But if he was the foreman builder, Mirabeau was the architect, and the house is justly called his.

The *Courrier de Provence* was in the first place the journal of the National Assembly, criticised it with a fine boldness, and gave a startlingly faithful picture of its operations.

THE VICOMTE DE MIRABEAU ("TONNEAU").

MIRABEAU'S BROTHER.

From a Print in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

CHAPTER XX

THE SPEECHES ON THE VETO AND ON THE BANKRUPTCY

THE united Parliament at Versailles began by what it called "making the Constitution"—as if it were a pudding, said Arthur Young—and then by "framing the famous Declaration of the Rights of Man" in Dumont's phrase, or in "quarrelling for a month over syllables" in Mirabeau's.

The advent of *noblesse* and clergy had not brought with it either sweetness or light; and the manners of the Assembly still left everything to be desired. Voting was by sitting or rising. If a deputy did not want the man next to him to rise, he pulled him down by his coat; if he did, he kicked him to get up. There was often a regular free fight for the tribune, and the victor had the habit of staying there until the rest of the Assembly, talking, or even shouting, with each other, entirely drowned his voice.

Hundreds of voluble and interfering spectators still thronged the hall; by now, they had an acknowledged right to be there.

The newcomers formed the party of the Right—that is, the conservative or royalist party—and most of them had come in much in the spirit of Tonneau

Mirabeau who, at the first public sitting of the three orders, broke his sword, saying that a gentleman had no further need of it because the King would no longer be king. During debates, many of the young aristocrats would scornfully and pointedly laugh and talk to drown the voices of the democratic deputies. It was calculated that Tonneau could waste a sitting a week by his practical jokes and drunken freaks. Sometimes, in the midst of a discussion, a dozen royalists would stroll out of the hall—insolent, smiling, contemptuous. But this policy was suicidal—the Assembly simply pursued its way without them. Espréménil headed the small party opposed to all reforms. One of its ablest speakers was Cazalès, and the Abbé Maury, representing the clergy, was a good debater, and often crossed swords with Mirabeau. "When he is right," said Gabriel-Honoré superbly, "we argue; when he is wrong, I crush him."

Tonneau himself, when he was drunk enough without being too drunk, was one of the wittiest and most vigorous speakers his party possessed, and hurled against the Left in general, and the member for Aix in particular, the most telling sarcasms. The great Mirabeau wrote to his uncle that such party differences never "diminished or enfeebled" his attachment to his younger brother. Having regard to the nature of Gabriel-Honoré, this may well be true.

The Left contained the moderates of every class—clergy, nobles, and commons—and was distinguished by the excellence of its intentions and the length of its speeches. Without political rules to guide it, with no practical experience of political life, "theory," as Taine puts it, was the great stumbling-block of

this party. In immense discourses, which they had prepared beforehand, the moderates described from the tribune, often with great cleverness and feeling, a Utopia for France—omitting directions of the way to get there for the best of reasons—they did not know it themselves.

The Extreme Left was the party of the *enragés,* the destructors, and, in six months, was by far the most numerous of all.

"The fourth party," says Louis Blanc, "consisted of one man, Mirabeau."

So many able pencils have drawn, from life, that colossal figure, as it appeared in the tribune, that one can still see the huge head, thrown back with a disdain "that amounted to insolence," the blazing eyes, the "tremendous movement of the shoulders like an elephant," the unwieldy body, and the great face riddled with disease. Mirabeau himself described his own appearance—"One does not half realise the power of my ugliness." . . . "When I shake my terrible mane not a soul dares interrupt."

Add to this, the chords of a voice, "full, sonorous, and flexible"; that voice that could be a "voice of honey" or of the deep, rumbling thunders of a storm. Sometimes he would begin hesitatingly as if searching for the right word, but as he went on, his speech gathered force and volume until it became a torrent sweeping all before it. If he had—and he had—the ardour and gesture of the southerner, the rapidity and animation of the Frenchman—as an orator these were his only Gallic traits. Alone among the great speakers of his country, Mirabeau's speech had what Carlyle calls "a totally unornamented force and

massiveness." For French volubility, "the storm and thunders of the opera," the rant and fatal fluency poured from too many mouths around him, he had and expressed a superb contempt. Of that lightness —which is at once the greatest charm and the greatest defect of the Frenchman's character, as of his art and his literature—Mirabeau had not a trace.

He spoke, indeed, never to make a speech, but wholly to prompt to action. The fierce compelling need that inspired his words, the awful straits from which they must deliver his country, were ever before that great and sombre mind. His enthusiasm was always worlds away from the paid enthusiasm of the professional demagogue, and it was the fierceness of his sincerity and the depth of his convictions that gave his oratory what Madame de Staël called "a power of life."

Of brilliant improvisation and retort he was, as has been seen, master, rather than of the carefully prepared discourse. His chief weakness lay in refutation and discussion. Mirabeau was no debater. His facility for reading notes as he was speaking, for rapidly incorporating their meaning and breathing on them the breath of life, has also been observed.

He had, as an orator, another splendid gift. Passionate Riquetti as he was, as a speaker his wisdom seldom failed—on several notable occasions it did fail conspicuously—to hold his temper in check. "In the midst of the fearful disorder of a séance," says Chateaubriand, "I have seen him at the tribune, gloomy, ugly, and motionless: he recalled Milton's Chaos, shapeless and impassive in the centre of his own confusion." Dumont remembered hearing him

read a report on the town of Marseilles which the Right interrupted every moment with insults. "He heard all round him the words, slanderer, liar, murderer, scoundrel—all the eloquence of the *halles*. He waited a moment, and then addressed the most furious in a dulcet voice: 'I wait, gentlemen, until these amenities are finished,' and he went on as calmly as if he had received the most favourable reception." It was when his passions did for a moment break their leash, that his hearers shrank back, afraid.

As to the matter of his speeches—they can be read, and the reader can see for himself, standing out clear and sharp, their three great qualities: political sagacity, foresight, and knowledge of the human heart. For Mirabeau there were, indeed, "no political enigmas"; his perspicacity was worth "an army of spies in the enemy's camp," and his insight into human nature would be proved, if there were nothing else to prove it, by his estimate of, and his advice to, the King he had to serve.

The faults of his style are the faults of his character and his blood: a vocabulary too rich and grandiose, a superabundance of ideas, which got in his way even in his familiar letters. Filled with bold metaphors and gigantic images, "vast, massive, imposing," Mirabeau's style is certainly the man himself.

But though he led and ruled the united Assembly —as it were, by right divine—he was still a leader and ruler untrusted.

Paris was a very hotbed of revolt. On July 21st, it murdered Berthier and Foulon—Foulon, with his mouth filled with the grass he had said the people should eat: and Mirabeau, in his newspaper, though

he reproved the bloodshed and the vengeance, compared that vengeance favourably with "the hells tyranny had invented to torment its victims."

On July 29th, the capital was delighted, but not quieted, by the return of Necker. Mirabeau was constantly going to and from Versailles, often twice a day; sometimes, says Bailly in his Memoirs, by night to the gatherings of the Parisian districts. The districts grew daily more seditious—what did that mean? Then Mirabeau was known to have just made the acquaintance of that mob-leader, Camille Desmoulins. What did *that* mean? The fact that Mirabeau had no money did not prevent malice from suggesting that he had the leaders of sedition in his pay, and thus encouraged the riots to spite Necker.

The story runs that, on August 1st, Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angely rose in the Assembly and moved a resolution, obviously directed against Mirabeau, that no member of the Assembly should be allowed to go to the districts of Paris without special leave. Mirabeau was not present. But the next day, as he passed Regnault in the Salle des Menus, he hissed at him as he passed, "I will make you weep tears of blood." Though Regnault's resolution had been received at first with loud applause, when Mirabeau had answered it, it was abandoned by every one. "Whatever party Mirabeau defends," said M. de la Ferté, "it will always be the strongest armed."

A few days later, on August 4th, one Salamon opened the eyes of the government to the condition of the country by reading aloud the Report of the Committee of Researches on the State of France. By chance or by design—Lucas de Montigny thinks

that, foreseeing, as he foresaw everything, the delirium of that night, Mirabeau was absent on purpose —he did not hear the account of skies red from blazing *châteaux*, of the landowners barely and thankfully escaping with their lives; of the bonfires of the title-deeds and heirlooms of ages; of rapine, plunder, murder, and misery—the last degree of misery that fears nothing—which stirred the blood of the House to chivalrous and reckless action. He, who alone was wise among so much dangerous cleverness, took no part in that "orgy" that "feverish night" as he called it—"the Bartholomew of privileges"—when, in a transport of generous passion, nobles and clergy came forward to renounce tithes, feudal rights, pensions, seigneurial courts and exemptions, game laws, and the "right of the dove-cot," sacrificing, in a frenzy of liberality, everything—even what did not belong to them.

But the next morning—that sober "next morning" of a debauch of wine or sentiment—the great and solemn voice in the *Courrier de Provence* called enthusiasm to reason, bade those hot spirits see how "they had destroyed in one night the whole fabric of the ancient monarchy," and had not wherewithal to build in its place.

"It is not, my dear uncle," Mirabeau wrote to the Bailli a few months later, "that I in the least regret the abolition of what remains of the feudal system. . . . You think that a lord is a very useful protector to his vassals. . . . But . . . for the misfortune of humanity, lords such as you, are very rare."

A change so vast and far-reaching should have been accomplished indeed, but accomplished soberly,

thoughtfully, gradually; or else, as the *Courrier* put it, "the transit from bad to good is often more terrible than the evil itself."

But that weak and useless prayer, "Oh, call back yesterday, bid time return!" was never on Mirabeau's lips. "It will be delightful to us," he wrote in his paper, "if, after having decried that which was inspired by a generous enthusiasm for the public good, we can follow its development in the thoughtful labours of wisdom."

A few days later, when Clermont-Tonnerre inconsistently requested the Assembly to pass a resolution that the King, in spite of the renunciation of what was called the Hunting Privilege on August 4th, should still be allowed to hunt everywhere he liked, Mirabeau answered very pertinently that, as the King was the protector of all property, he did not see why he should be exempt from a law which had just made property sacred.

Meanwhile, the Assembly was still talking fruitlessly over their Declaration of Rights. Mirabeau, having first contended its publication should be postponed, by August 1st had impatiently voted with the majority in the Assembly for its immediate appearance. Get it done and have done with it as soon as possible! But when the draft, which he with some other members had drawn up for it, was disapproved and refused by the House, the haughty Riquetti veered round to his first, and real, opinion. This is not the time to publish the thing at all! A bitter-tongued old Breton member took the opportunity to get up and sarcastically admire the talent of the member for Aix in drawing the House after him—

in the most opposite directions—and taunted him—it was so fatally tempting and easy!—with his past. Even Loménie allows that it was with "une bonne grâce noble" the great tribune avowed the sins of his youth. After all, it is not only by their deeds men should be judged, but also by the way they bear the consequences of their deeds.

The new Declaration of Rights, principally composed by Dumont, was adopted by the Assembly on August 18th. Full of sound and fury, its real danger was not, as Mirabeau very well saw, in itself, but in the moment of its appearance. A lighted match cast on the ground is harmless enough; drop it near a barrel of gunpowder, and the case is altered.

But a far wider, greater, and more urgent question was troubling the soul of Mirabeau, the soul of the Assembly, and of all France—the King's Veto. Shall the King have the absolute right to veto the Acts of his Parliament? or shall he only have a veto which will suspend a measure for six months, after which, if the legislature passes it again, it becomes law, whether the King likes it or not? This absurd compromise was then called the Suspensive Veto.

That opinion in favour of the Absolute Veto which rage had forced to Mirabeau's mouth on June 16th, was also the conviction of his calm and sober judgment. He saw that to give to the sovereign the Absolute Veto would be to keep the power still really with the people: for, as in England, the king who misused that authority would upset his throne.

Mirabeau came down to the Salle des Menus on September 1st with a mind very clearly made up on the subject, but with a written speech, long, dull,

obscure, and largely composed by the Marquis de Casaux, who was partially English. Mirabeau had, in fact, so little mastered the contents of the paper in front of him that he blundered and stumbled over it, great beads of perspiration stood on his forehead, and the confusion of idea was so great that half his hearers did not know which side he was defending, and some of them felt sure he was for the Suspensive Veto. When his own version of the speech appeared in the *Courrier de Provence* the Court frowned angrily on a defender of Absolute Veto, who only desired it because it would be generally a dead letter; while the mobs of the Palais-Royal, whom the professional agitators had goaded to fury with the word "Veto" as a bull is goaded by a red flag, were enraged that their Mirabeau should defend it at all.

When, a day or two after his speech, Mirabeau was in Paris with Dumont, crowds of poor people were waiting for his carriage outside Lejay's house, and threw themselves upon him, begging and praying him with tears not to let the King have the Absolute Veto. If he has it—"all is lost—we are slaves." The Count quieted them, as he very well knew how, with that superb, kind, condescending, patrician manner; reassured them against the bogies of their imagination, and sent them away comforted.

The Suspensive Veto gained the day when the question was put to the vote on September 11th. Mirabeau did not vote at all. Camille Desmoulins and his followers cried out loudly that this neutrality proved that he was for the Suspensive Veto after all!

It had another reason.

At six o'clock in the morning of September 9th,

at Gien, Sophie de Monnier committed suicide by asphyxiation with the fumes of charcoal.

It was eight years since Mirabeau had parted from her—in bitterness; it was six since her husband's death had left her free to form new ties. Her own relations then begged her to return to them. She declined: took a little house of her own near the convent at Gien, and, the lax, convenient morality of the day easily forgiving a sinner still so pretty and charming, entered much into society. A young officer fell in love with her, but the attachment was stormy and unhappy, and came to nothing. Then a M. de Poterat—an ex-captain of cavalry and a widower—offered her marriage. Sophie, warmly and sentimentally attached to him, saw before her an honourable future. But it was not to be. His failing health caused her cruel anxiety; and his death on September 8, 1789, at which she was present, plunged her into a passion of despair. The girlish Sophie had always seen herself as a heroine of romance—the woman of five-and-thirty had still, alas! the girl's rash impulse and the girl's undisciplined heart. Ysabeau, her friend and doctor, asked her to live with his wife and himself. She agreed; begging only for one day's quiet and freedom. She used it to a terrible purpose. When Ysabeau returned to Gien, after a few hours' absence, he found her dead. With a desperate determination, the unhappy woman had tied her feet together, and her arm to the sofa, so that, if her resolution failed her, her fate would still be sealed.

Ysabeau had a brother-in-law, Vallet, who was a member of the National Assembly. He commissioned him to break the news of Sophie's death to

Mirabeau as gently as might be. Vallet, for some unknown reason, concluded that Mirabeau was heartless, and that tenderness was unnecessary. He crossed the Salle des Menus abruptly—Vallet was a curé, and of the party of the Right. Mirabeau, he says, knew him well, and hated him better. He asked what Vallet did on that side of the House. For answer, Vallet gave him Ysabeau's letter. The man who had been Sophie's lover read it very slowly, and his face altered painfully. Then he commanded himself, handed Vallet back the letter, and left the Salle des Menus at once. He did not reappear there for several days. And Vallet, whose judgment of human nature appears to have been extraordinarily deficient, considered his theory of Mirabeau's heartlessness proven.

Heartless! Amid his thousand vices, this barren quality had never a part. One need not doubt that Gabriel-Honoré remembered, not the woman from whom he had parted, weary and disillusioned, but the girl whose childish and dimpled loveliness had won his youth—not the Sophie of the Gien convent, but the Sophie of Pontarlier and of Amsterdam—the exquisite and sorrowful creature to whom he had poured out the *Lettres d'Amour,* and the mother of the daughter he never saw.

He was back at his place in the House on September 15th, taking vigorous part in the debate on the Heredity of the Throne. The voices which, a few weeks ago, had accused him of conspiring against royalty with Camille Desmoulins, now accused him of conspiring against it with Orléans, because he maintained that, in the case of a Regency, no man, not

born in France, should be regent—which of course means by implication that Orléans shall!

But for the moment, France had in hand a subject of greater import. To avert, by any means, the national bankruptcy which stared her in the face, Necker had asked, on August 25th, for a loan of eighty millions at five per cent. The wretched country could only raise thirty-three millions—a result which ruined her credit. So, on September 24th, since desperate evils need desperate remedies, Necker proposed that every man should become a patriot and give to the revenue one quarter of his income—this huge, voluntary income-tax to be paid on the taxpayers' own valuations within three years.

The Assembly listened, noisy and hostile, as it well might be to such a proposal. But the man who was Necker's contemptuous enemy, saw that in Necker's wild scheme there lay at least a hope for his country, and that drowning men must needs catch at any spar they can. Mirabeau forced his way to the tribune and, after four baffled efforts, gained the attention of the scornful and restless House. He had prepared no speech. In this one, at least, his Dumonts and Duroverays could claim no part. His own genius and his own throbbing sense of the imminence of his country's peril, forced his hearers to recognise it too. In long, rolling phrases, like the booming of an angry sea, he showed them the earth on which they stood, ready to swallow them up quick; proved to them that self-sacrifice was, here, self-interest; that they *must* give "a portion of their income to save all they possessed."

"Are you so sure . . . in the incalculable miseries

which such a catastrophe (as national bankruptcy) would pour out upon France . . . that so many hungry men will leave you to enjoy calmly luxuries of which you have refused to diminish the quantity or to impoverish the quality? No, you will perish . . . and the loss of your honour will not save for you one of your detestable indulgences . . . you will all be engulfed in the universal ruin, and those most interested to make the sacrifice demanded by the government, are you yourselves."

He, who, when he rose, had had his hand against every man's and every man's hand against his, sat down a victor so complete that no one even dared answer him. His motion was carried unanimously in a transport of enthusiasm. Ferrières spoke of Mirabeau's eloquence as "mastering the judgment and the will." Molé, the actor, pressed forward to congratulate him: "Surely you have missed your vocation!" and Mirabeau, Mirabeau-like, was quite pleased with this doubtful compliment. The *Journal de Paris,* recording the scene, quoted Æschines, "What would it have been if you had heard and seen the monster?"

From that day Dumont declared that Mirabeau was a "unique being; he had no rival."

That is, as an orator. But in these autumn days the very air men breathed was heavy with unrest and suspicion, ominous of the earthquake and the storm. What was the Court doing? and what, in face of the famine and winter coming once more on the capital, had the Assembly done? Above all, what was that man doing, who led the Assembly?

In this September, Mirabeau had Camille Des-

moulins staying with him at Versailles—Desmoulins, mob-leader, agitator, if not yet "Attorney-General of the *lanterne.*" Desmoulins wrote to his father of the seductiveness of Mirabeau's table and personality—it was so difficult to hate aristocrats under the sway and charm of this one! But suspicion—a stupid jade for ever—preferred to think it was the guest who was influencing the host; as if a Desmoulins had ever led a Mirabeau since time began!

Then, too, if Mirabeau was not at this time much with Orléans, he was much with Orléans's friends, and he had voted for Orléans's regency.

Complicity again! an anti-royal plot! There is still many a biographer who believes in a Mirabeau's paid secret alliance with Philippe Égalité. But if that tool was not too dirty for Mirabeau's unscrupulousness, his vast sagacity soon found it too brittle, too mean, and too weak. "Ce j— f— ne vaut pas la peine qu'on se donne pour lui." Even the coarse contempt of that untranslatable repudiation is no proof of Mirabeau's innocence; but there is proof in the declaration of Dumont, ever in his master's closest intimacy, that if Mirabeau was leagued with Orléans, he, Dumont, knew nothing of it. While it is further certain that, at this very time, when, as La Marck put it, "Orléans's gold should have been showering on him," Gabriel-Honoré owed to La Marck's patriotic generosity almost his whole means of subsistence. And it was at this very time, too, that Mirabeau was continually imploring La Marck to warn his royal master and mistress of the ruin coming quick upon them, "to make them know" before it was too late to avoid. Nay, more, it was in this very September,

when the Count was said to be thus conspiring against their interests, that La Marck first proposed him to Marie-Antoinette as the means to save her crown, and, it might be, her life.

That some great disaster was imminent, was indeed clear to duller wits than Mirabeau's. In a single fortnight, Necker had to deplore the issue of six thousand passports to leave the kingdom. Warned sometimes by mysterious messages from humble friends or dependents, or by the voices in the air, many of the greatest and wealthiest families of Paris and Versailles fled daily from the evil to come. Did it need conspiracy or double-dealing on the part of a Mirabeau that he should know what all men knew —with something added?

In the midst of the prodigal disorder of his private life; as he sat at his lavish table, or with his wicked mistress; as he stood in Boze's studio at Versailles for that full-length portrait, since famous, and talked to Mounier, to Desmoulins, and to Dumont, of the things that were fallen upon the earth; as he dominated the Assembly, or as, in bitter solitude, he paid in cruel physical sufferings for the sins done in the body, and in black remorse for the sins of his soul, Mirabeau heard the loud knocking at the door and knew the judgment was come.

CHAPTER XXI

THE INSURRECTION OF WOMEN, AND THE SCHEME FOR A MINISTRY

Towards the end of September, royalty had recalled the Flanders regiment to Versailles. On October 1st, the soldiers were entertained by the King's bodyguard at a lavish banquet, at which the Queen appeared, and the guests, transported by wine and enthusiasm, sang the monarchical "O Richard, O mon roi, l'univers t'abandonne," tore off their tricoloured cockades, and replaced them with white ones, distributed by the Court ladies.

That "orgy," as he called it, drove Mirabeau and, with him, three parts of the Assembly, to exasperation. To the fury of miserable and starving Paris it was the flame to the tinder.

In the early morning of October 5th, an angry House discussed, first, a letter—in which the King had characteristically said that, although he did not wholly dislike the Declaration of Rights, he could not give it his formal sanction for the present—and the banquet of October 1st. As to the deferred sanction, Mirabeau sarcastically suggested that the Assembly should ask Louis XVI. what the jester had asked Philip II.: "What would you do, Philip, if

all the world said No, when you said Yes?" To the furious proposition of Pétion that the "orgy" of October 1st should be formally denounced and the denunciation laid on the table of the Assembly, he answered that, though he considered such a denunciation would be ill-timed at such a moment, still he would endorse it if the Assembly would declare every person in the kingdom, except the King, under and responsible to the law. The House broke into uproar. "What, the Queen too?" said a voice. "The Queen just as the others," answered Mirabeau, and, as he made his way from the tribune to his seat, added, or is said to have added, loud enough to be heard by those near him, "I should denounce the Queen and the Duc de Guiche."

When, thereafter, that utterance was thrown in his teeth, he declared that he did it to stop at all costs the Right from raising a debate which at the moment would have been fatal; but, in view of his character, and of the *mea culpa* he cried when La Marck bitterly reproached him, the most natural explanation is that, goaded by the wild foolishness of royalty, he spoke in a rage.

He had hardly regained his seat, when he left it once more, pressed to the presidential desk—Mounier was President now—and, being "warned," as he declared himself—though how and when he was so warned will never be known—said, in low, harsh tones:

"Mounier, Paris is marching on us."

Mounier answered scornfully that he had heard nothing of it.

"I tell you Paris is marching on us," answered

Mirabeau. "Pretend to be ill; go to the *château* and prepare them; say, if you like, the warning is from me; I consent, only make this scandalous controversy cease; there is not a moment to be lost."

"So much the better," says Mounier, still contemptuous, "we shall be a republic the sooner."

There are many versions of this scene, as there are many versions of every scene in the confusion and fearfulness of this day.

Mounier went, as he was bidden, with his ominous message. Soon after, Mirabeau also left the Assembly. La Marck declared that Mirabeau spent that whole afternoon with him, studying a map of Brabant, and "talking of the crisis in Paris." Mirabeau adds that he and La Marck went together to the Assembly for a short time in the afternoon, and then back, still together, to La Marck's house.

Between three and four o'clock, under the dripping trees and skies, there marched up the Avenue de Versailles, singing and shouting as they came, the scum and rabble of the women of Paris—fishwives of the *halles,* drunken viragoes from Saint-Antoine, thieves and prostitutes, honest women driven mad at last by the sight of children starving at their breasts —"ten thousand Judiths," armed, irregularly perhaps, but with arms which after all shall serve! having as spokesman and leader a young man called Maillard, and united in a fierce twofold aim: Bread and Vengeance. Right up to the doors of the Salle des Menus, "rushing and crushing," they came. Fifteen of them, sodden, ragged, threatening, led by Maillard, entered; the rest stood without, holding back—as the tigress before she springs.

Maillard demanded that a deputation of members of that House headed by Mounier (scornful and indifferent no more) and twelve of the women, should go at once to the King and petition his Majesty on the state of his starving capital. Maillard himself remained behind—to restrain his tigresses, if he could.

At eight o'clock, Dr. Guillotin, who had been one of the deputation, brought back word from the palace that the King would agree (as usual when he must) to anything and everything.

It was at this hour that Dumont came down to the Salle des Menus. By now, the whole host of women had streamed into the hall. The Vice-President had declared the Assembly adjourned. Ever and anon, couriers were bringing in news of the approach of Lafayette, leading thirty thousand of the men of Paris. It was some time before eleven o'clock that Dumont left the hall, and went to fetch Mirabeau, who was already in bed. They hastened to the Assembly together.

The scene that Mirabeau saw there is without counterpart in the history of parliaments, and perhaps in the history of the world.

Mounier had returned; had caused the drums to be sounded to recall the deputies to their places; and, in answer to demands so fierce he dared not refuse them, had sent out for food and drink to supply the rabble of starving women who had usurped his House.

Here, were brawny fishwives, drunk with wine, and there, termagants, with the more dangerous wine of a mad excitement in their veins. A determined *dame* of the *halles* had seized the presidential chair. All

over the benches of the deputies, ousting them from their places, the vilest creatures of the Parisian pavement lounged and sprawled. The popular members they kissed and embraced: the unpopular they insulted. With the least repulsive of them Tonneau Mirabeau could be seen toying and laughing. Howling down any luckless deputy who dared to get on his feet—there was, or there was supposed to be, a discussion on the Penal Code in progress—jesting, blaspheming, with the veil of decency and convention wholly torn away, and the human beast looking out of their hungry eyes, vile, filthy, degraded, and most miserable—the old *régime* saw this day what its callousness and its tyrannies had made of the mothers of its citizens.

Long before he came, there had been shouts for "our little mother Mirabeau." If accomplice of the mob, here was his chance certainly to win its favour. As he entered, the voices were howling down the speakers with shrill screams of "Bread! No long speeches!" He forced his way to the tribune, and turned on the rabble with that superb wrath and mastery which had never failed him yet.

"I should like to know who dares to interrupt our sittings!"

Mounier's pleas for order had been totally scorned and unheeded. At the great voice and command of "our little mother Mirabeau," "all the women clapped, and cried 'Bravo!'" The floor, at least, of the House was cleared. The discussion on the Penal Code was resumed. Then, from the gallery, still filled with the mob, some irrepressible *poissarde,* who led about a hundred of her fellows,

shouted out stridently to the deputy on his feet, "Who is that talking down there? Make that chatterbox be quiet! We don't want to know about that, we want bread! Let our little mother Mirabeau speak, and we will listen to him!"

"Our little mother Mirabeau," says Dumont, became the cry of the whole House; "but Mirabeau was not the man to waste himself on these occasions, and, as he said, his popularity *was not of the populace.*"

Before midnight, an aide-de-camp came into the House with a message. Outside, through the wet blackness of the night, Versailles had seen the torches of Lafayette's "thirty thousand" flaring in the Avenue, and had heard the rumble of his drums.

"Cromwell-Grandison Lafayette!" Among all the nicknames given by Mirabeau, which Carlyle declared to be "worth whole treatises," there is none so apt and comprehensive as this one, and there was never a moment when it fitted the man as it fitted him to-night.

Here he was, after that dramatic march from Paris, bringing the Revolution, not to crush royalty, but to protect it: and here he himself, at the bar of the House, assured it that I, Lafayette, with my hand on my heart, will vouch for the conduct of my troops, and for the safety of this Assembly and this Assembly's master, if it be permitted that my National Guard have the care of the King's person, that hungry Paris be immediately provisioned, and that the King return to-morrow to the capital. To be sure, it might have been better for the King if Lafayette had prevented the rabble from ever leaving Paris,

as he might, perhaps, have prevented it; but then there would have been no picturesque rescue for Lafayette! Charming, high-flown, chivalrous, republican saviour of monarchy! Mirabeau saw to-night, as he always saw, what he called the "incurable weakness" of that sincere and delightful personality; and Lafayette saw in Mirabeau the black spots of his wickedness, blotting out his power and his genius as a thick cloud.

To-night was Lafayette's. His arrival had so far calmed things that, at three in the morning, Mirabeau proposed the adjournment of the Assembly. Only two hours later, in the dim dawn of October 6th, when Mirabeau, it may be, was sleeping after that wild day, when Lafayette, certainly, was snatching a brief repose, there came that immortal attack of the mob bivouacked without the palace, upon the bodyguard: the massacre of two of that guard: the distracted flight of royalty in the *Œil-de-Bœuf;* the King's agitated promises to go to Paris—or anywhere, for that matter, that brute force shall dictate—and then that scene on the balcony, when Lafayette reached his zenith, kissed the Queen's hand, turned the delirium of rage against her into a brief delirium of loyalty, and saved her—for the guillotine.

It was by now seven o'clock in the morning. At eleven the Assembly met. In the eight hours since it had separated the death-warrant of the French monarchy had been signed, and Louis XVI. was no longer a king but a puppet in the hands of the rabble; at the best, a figurehead, sometimes allowed by that rabble the semblance and glitter of kingship, but never for a moment permitted that power

which, when he had it, he had misused rather than abused.

That most of the persons about him realised the significance of the royal residence in Paris is not likely. Necker advised it—as a Necker would: and Mirabeau saw at once both that it had become unavoidable, and that, if it continued, it would be fatal.

The fact that the King had consented to take that step was announced to the House soon after it met. Mirabeau at once suggested that one hundred members of the Assembly should accompany his Majesty. If he will go, his Assembly shall go with him: if he will go, he must leave Paris again as quickly as may be, and I, as one of the Assembly, shall be near to advise and help that leaving! This certainly was in Mirabeau's mind. But there were those in the House —there was Mounier—who attributed to Mirabeau some—much, perhaps—of yesterday's insurrection, and who, as leader of the House in name, was jealous of the leader in reality. "If you think of the interests of the King and Queen," said Mirabeau, "you know that I have some popularity in Paris: it might be useful to them."

That day, the royal family, with its mob escort, took that awful journey to the capital. But Mirabeau was left at Versailles.

It was now evident to all men that the great vessel of the State had foundered. The rats had already left the sinking ship; and her officers and her crew began to join in the general *sauve qui peut!* On October 8th, Mounier resigned the presidency of the National Assembly, and, soon after fled to England.

Some fifty-four or fifty-five other deputies abandoned their posts.

A few days later, Mirabeau, now in Paris and lodging at an *hôtel garni* (the Hôtel de Malte, in the Rue Traversière, leading out of the Rue Richelieu, near the Palais-Royal), which he had occupied before his election to the States-General, saw there La Marck and Lauzun, who informed him that Lafayette had suggested that Orléans should emigrate. To be sure, for himself, for his character, his worth, his brains, no one could have wished to keep that sneak and traitor. But Mirabeau hated the proposal because, for one thing, it left too free a field for the schemes and the visionary republic of the proposer. With those shaggy brows deeply bent, he set to work at once, and composed a long written speech in which he denied his own complicity with Égalité, declared his flight to be inimical to the royal cause, and begged the King to force his cousin to return to his side and take up his duties.

The story runs how, on October 14th, Mirabeau going, with this speech in his pocket, from Paris to the Assembly at Versailles, met, on the Bridge of Sèvres, an aide-de-camp of Lafayette's, with Orléans's passport actually upon him. The speech could never be made. But the contempt the writer of it felt for this prince—my accomplice if you please!—broke from him not the less. *I* of his faction? "I would not have him for my lacquey!" In a few days Orléans was in London, "feasting with the Prince of Wales in ignominious safety."

That same day, October 14th, Mirabeau once more "opposed the popular party without losing his popu-

larity," this time by proposing the establishment of martial law in Paris—having as his guide and model, said his old friend Romilly, the Riot Act of England.

"Raving Paris" was, indeed, by now in such a condition that the strongest measures were not only justifiable but essential. And if the state of their capital was terrible, what of the state of the King and Queen? For her, at least, all the chivalry in La Marck's generous nature was on the alert. He himself, indeed, had only that "far-off touch of greatness to know well he was not great." But he could recognise genius when he saw it. Mirabeau owed him a reparation for that furious "I would denounce the Queen and the Duc de Guiche!" of October 5th. Let him make it now—as only he could make it.

In those trembling and breathless days which succeeded the Insurrection of Women, when, on all sides his brother deputies were fleeing from horrors they could not stay, when he himself must have gone to rest—rest!—at night, not knowing if he should see the dawn of another day, or over what seas of blood that next day's sun would rise, Mirabeau wrote one of the wisest of his works, that great Preface to the immortal *Notes for the Court,* in which, at once cool and urgent, vehement and judicious, he showed Majesty the Way Out.

The *Memoir for Monsieur*—that is the title by which the pamphlet is generally known—did not indeed take, or mistake, the Way Out of royalty's difficulties to be the Way Out of the kingdom. "If the royal family does not leave Paris"—starving, maddened Paris—"it and France are lost." But the King will be equally ruined if he escapes like a thief

in the night—even to the frontier. That "would be to declare war on the nation, and to abdicate the throne. A king who is the sole safeguard of his people does not fly from them, but takes them as the judge of his conduct and principles." Go boldly and openly to Rouen. Confide your safety and honour to your subjects, and to your faithful National Guard. Become yourself master and leader of the popular cause. Issue proclamations giving anew your royal sanction to the bases of the Constitution. Call to your side the National Assembly. If it will not come, summon another legislature. From that legislature select a ministry, as is done in England, a ministry to represent the people, and to be the executive.

At midnight on October 15th, La Marck was taken to the private apartments of Monsieur, the King's brother, and there gave him the Memoir, and warmly urged upon him that its author had never belonged to the faction of Orléans, and would prove as dangerous a foe as he would be a powerful friend.

Monsieur, Comte de Provence, afterwards Louis XVIII., was at this time a stout man of about thirty-four years old, with some pretence to literary culture and a very real talent for scheming and intrigue, which was only kept in check by his share of those inevitable Bourbon characteristics—vacillation and procrastination. He read the Memoir, and observed, very truly, that the chief obstacle to following its advice would be the King's character. To give an idea of his "weakness and indecision . . . imagine trying to keep oiled billiard balls together!" It may be that, in fact, Monsieur was none too eager to save his

brother—since there was only his life, and that of his little scrofulous son, between Monsieur himself and the throne of France. Anyhow, his reply was very discouraging. La Marck left the Luxembourg with "sadness in his soul." The Memoir was not acted on. But it gained one end—it brought Monsieur into relation with Mirabeau, and thus brought Mirabeau a step nearer the King.

The situation was, however, much too desperate for delay, and far too desperate for a sagacity like Mirabeau's to "knock at only one door."

In the *Memoir for Monsieur* he had suggested the plan of a ministry chosen by the King from the Assembly, a liberal ministry which should prompt a liberal king to be himself the head of a revolution. bloodless, peaceful, and reforming. An idea, surely —a splendid idea, worth the carrying out if our stiff-necked Riquetti pride has to go under for it, if it involves our taking but a minor place in that ministry, and serving under a vain, visionary Lafayette, or that "miserable charlatan of a Necker"!

The very morning after La Marck's midnight interview with Monsieur, Mirabeau met Lafayette by arrangement at Passy at the house of Caroline du Saillant's married daughter, the Marquise d'Aragon, a tranquil and domesticated young woman, entirely without political aspirations—the dear "Bonnette" of her famous uncle.

That notorious trio of the Assembly, Lameth, Duport, and Barnave—seeing, as Mirabeau saw, that union was, in such a crisis, worth any sacrifice—had urged the meeting and were present at it. But if Mirabeau's public virtue and statesmanship could

bow to the necessity of an alliance with this picturesque Marquis, his jealousy of Lafayette's splendid luck, and his rage with Lafayette's calm goodness and complete inadequacy, provoked him to open the proceedings with a very black account of the methods by which he had won his election in Provence, and then to fling at Lafayette the famous and highly immoral axiom that in revolutions "la petite morale tue la grande." He went on to abuse the Queen; and Lafayette rose, it seems, to this bait also.

Still, the interview was not unsuccessful. Lafayette, at any rate, did not object to the scheme for a ministry; henceforth, he and Mirabeau met often, not as friends, indeed, but as colleagues, essential to each other and to their country; and entered into a correspondence which—that is, on Mirabeau's side—began by being polite, though it ended by being honest.

But there were others besides "Cromwell-Grandison" to be won to the scheme.

It was only five months since Necker had repulsed with icy coldness Mirabeau's overtures of alliance at Montmorin's house, and eight months since Montmorin himself had turned his back upon the thief who had betrayed his trust and published the *Secret History*.

"But now," as Mirabeau wrote to La Marck, "Necker . . . begins to see that if he does not take care, one will be reduced to let him go." On October 17th, both Necker and Montmorin met the man they still hated, but no more dared to ignore.

Necker, indeed, still evinced the most galling contempt for Mirabeau's character, and declared, almost in so many words, that he would not be in the same

ministry with such a scoundrel; while Mirabeau swore afterwards that *he* would not be in the ministry with such a fool.

Not the less, in a scheme for that ministry, which Mirabeau submitted to Lafayette at the end of this October, to Necker was assigned the post of Prime Minister, "because he must be made as powerless as he is incapable, and yet keep his popularity for the King." Lafayette himself was to be Marshal of France and temporary Commander-in-Chief of the Army "to remake it." Talleyrand (though he, too, shut his doors upon me) shall be Minister of Finance, "a post which no one could fill better."

As for the writer himself, there is a note in his own hand suggesting that he should keep his position in the Assembly and have a seat in the cabinet, but no further office, because it is essential for the government that "its chief men shall be of good principles and character."

There is something, surely, not unpathetic in the generosity of the implication, and once again one tastes that salt of virtue which preserved Mirabeau, even at his worst, from utter corruption.

On October 19th, the Assembly, which he described to Lafayette as "a wild ass which could only be mounted with a great deal of management," followed the King to Paris, and took up its temporary quarters in the Hall of the Archbishop's Palace.

It sat there but a very few weeks, but during that time it accomplished one of the most drastic changes of the Revolution.

As far back as this August, 1789, Mirabeau had addressed himself to the question of Church property,

and had made a speech urging the substitution of a paid for an endowed clergy. "It is time . . . that one should abjure the prejudice of ignorant pride which disdains the words 'salary' and 'salaried.' *I* only know of three ways of existing: you must be a beggar, a thief, or a salaried person."

While the Assembly was still sitting at Versailles, Talleyrand had proposed, as a means of averting the national bankruptcy, that the riches of the Church and the religious houses should be poured into the national coffers.

Now, on October 30th, Mirabeau rose to support the motion of his old friend and foe, and, in terms of great moderation, declared the right of the State to dispose of the property of the Church for public good. Loud murmurs had greeted his August speech. Now, before he could make another, prepared for November 2d, on the same subject, Talleyrand's measure was carried—"the nation," as Mirabeau had put it, was declared "the real proprietor of the possessions of the clergy"—while that clergy was to be paid by the nation, as he had proposed.

This interference of Mirabeau in things religious naturally suggests the question—always of supreme value and interest in studying the character of any man—what was his religion?

From the full, spontaneous letters to Sophie de Monnier—those outpourings of his heart and his youth—or from his impulsive, intimate correspondence with his friends, the real truth as to his belief is more likely to be gathered than from any set declaration.

In a punishing and rewarding God, he expressed

a faith, although sometimes only the qualified faith of the agnostic's prayer: "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul!"

Of the immortality of the soul, he wrote to Madame de Nehra that it was "a natural belief, rooted in the heart."

"Il ne me répond pas, mais peut-être il m'entend." "These touching and simple words, written on a friend's grave, have always seemed to me to be the most eloquent thing that can be said in favour of the immortality of the soul."

Of the great religion of his country, he wrote from Vincennes that, if he was "weak enough to have an absolute need of a religious belief, our theological system would be the last I should choose."

Yet, when in the course of his political life he met, as he often met, that religion in open field as open foe, it was ever with a grave respect, or at the worst a "noble irony"—as enemy indeed, but as a great and honourable enemy—and on a Mirabeau's lips was never the sneer and gibe of a Voltaire, nor the smooth assent of a Talleyrand with his tongue in his cheek.

For Mirabeau was pre-eminently not irreligious, but *non*-religious. He lived, as the majority of human beings live and die, not in hostility to religion, but in indifference to it. The full, rushing tide of his life and work in the present swept away the very thought of a life to come.

CHAPTER XXII

THE ALLIANCE WITH MONSIEUR AND THE PAYMENT OF THE COURT

In the account of her life with Mirabeau, which Madame de Nehra wrote at the request of Dr. Cabanis in 1806, she records how, "more than a year" after she left Paris, she returned to it "with the assistance of Lord Lansdowne and Vaughan."

"One night, when something unusual agitated him," Mirabeau sought her out, poured out to her, as he used in old days, all his griefs, fears, plans, hopes—overwhelmed her once more with the torrent of his passion and his eloquence, talked wildly of an embassy on which she should accompany him—in a word, was once more that Mirabeau who, five years before, had bewitched her from her convent to the joys and wretchedness, the dreams and storms, which had made up her life with him.

"At this time," she wrote, "I could have revived in him those old feelings."

Revived? They had never died. But the reason for which she had left him still held good, and his "use and name and fame" remained at the mercy of Madame Lejay. He came two or three times more to see his "best and only friend." Tender and

greatly compassionate, she was yet firm in her resolve never again to link her life with his. Only twenty-four, bitter experience had made her wiser than her years, and she knew that she could never save him from himself. After a while, he ceased to ask for her. He went, as it were, out into the night, and plunged into every excess of dissipation and of work.

No man, perhaps, who has not studied the life of Mirabeau, can know the full meaning of industry. It has been seen that when he was but a vagrant genius, seeking his destiny in Berlin, his diligence was prodigious and incredible.

"My lord," said the elder Pitt to the Duke of Devonshire, "I am sure that I can save this country, and that nobody else can." Now, Pitt's preoccupation *par excellence* was Mirabeau's too—with labours and difficulties added of which Mirabeau's great model had never an idea. For if Pitt was the greatest statesman in the England of his day, in *his* "crowded hour" Mirabeau was the only statesman in France, and upon his stalwart shoulders rested the salvation, not only of his country, but of the office and the person of the incapable King, the conduct and guidance of that "many-headed beast," a mob thirsty for vengeance, the direction of an Assembly not less impulsive and intractable, and—not the least anxious of tasks—the management of Lafayette's vain visions and Necker's self-complacency.

In a brief biography, such as the present, it is only possible to describe, and that very briefly, the most famous speeches of the great tribune, while to give even an idea of the labour which they involved is not

easy. For though to this orator above all orators "words" were "the daughters of earth, and things" were "the sons of heaven," yet, since it was by words he must lead to deeds, it behoved him to weigh well those words, before he uttered them, in the scales of his wisdom and his prudence, and to build slowly and with infinite pains the pompous structure of those sonorous sentences. Concede that statistics and history—all the dry-as-dust facts, if one will—were furnished by colleagues and secretaries. There still remains enough of what must needs have been done by Mirabeau himself, and by himself only, to occasion, in the phrase of Carlyle, "a fret and fever" that kept "heart and brain on fire," and to make Mirabeau, as he had once called himself, "the spendthrift of vitality."

But the now famous speeches were only a few out of many. There were speeches on questions small now, but great enough then: speeches on subjects always dull and necessary; speeches to confute the wily, to reassure the simple, to inform ignorance, and to curb haste. There were speeches on Provincial Administration, on the Political Education of Public Functionaries, on the Riots at Marseilles, and on Bankrupts being denied the Suffrage; and speeches, long and laboriously prepared, which, for one reason or another, were never delivered.

Besides this, not content with the gigantic task he *must* perform, this prodigy of energy must needs interfere in what was not his business, and pile interests on duties.

In the rush even of this 1789, he made time—he must literally have made it—to master thoroughly

the subject of the Emancipation of the Negroes, as put before him by Clarkson; to enter into an enormous correspondence with Clarkson on the subject; to prepare a long speech of most moving eloquence in favour of it; diligently to canvass the Assembly to support his motion, and to write on the question long letters to the younger Pitt and to Wilberforce.

The national archives still bear witness to the catholicity of his tastes, and on many subjects far more foreign to his master-motive—the gradual enfranchisement of France—than the liberation of slaves, one may still see papers in his fair-seeming but illegible hand.

It must be considered, too, that the lavishness and redundancy of his style greatly added to his work. He could no more be neat, precise, concise in his writing than in his life. In speech or in pamphlet, he raises image upon image, simile upon simile—emphasises, elaborates, repeats—builds a tower of reason, imposing and massive, before he brings it down upon his enemies with a crash.

But pamphlets and speeches were only part of his clerical labour. Comps declared that the letters his master received constituted an enormous business to read; and he read or looked through them all himself. His secretaries usually composed the answers from brief notes he flung to them, but such notes were innumerable, and demanded something of his brain and his zeal. Further, he had upon his shoulders the techincal and social business of his statesmanship.

Then with Mirabeau, alas! when brain and body were spent with the vast labours of the day, the fatal

vice of his constitution drove him by night to excesses, the most deplorable and dangerous. True, in this age of high play and deep potations, he neither gambled nor drank. But history has told of, and fancy has embroidered on, the orgies of the evening —wild suppers given to the dancing girls of the opera—the vilest sensual indulgence, from which the memory of Henriette could not save him; nay, into which, to quench the stabbing bitterness of the knowledge that his own conduct had driven her from him, he plunged the deeper.

What wonder that his friends began to see a painful alteration in his health? "Je ne serai pas longtemps malade," he had written from Vincennes to Julie Dauvers, "car je n'en ai pas le temps, et je ne veux pas." He had less time and will than ever now. He had scarcely time to sleep. For the hard exercise—walking, riding, fencing, swimming—with which he had been used to keep his unruly body in condition, he had no leisure. He drove even the brief distance from his own house to the Assembly. He told Pellenc he had more life than ten men—and, if capacity for work be life, he had. But he was beginning to suffer, and at times to suffer acutely, from an internal trouble and from rheumatism. His old enemy, ophthalmia, so greatly affected him that he often appeared in the House with a bandage over his eyes. His doctor, Cabanis, said of him that, though "his muscles always remained those of a Hercules, his nerves were those of a fanciful and delicate woman."

"Careless, reckless, and fearless of what 's past, present, or to come; insensible of mortality and

desperately mortal"—the Shakespearian lines well sum up the Mirabeau of these latter days.

It was not, however, only in his private capacity that, justly or unjustly, Fate had at this time her buffet ever ready for him.

In September and October, he had strongly urged on his readers, in the *Courrier de Provence,* his scheme for a ministry—that ministry to be chosen from the members of the Assembly. On November 6th, he made a speech in the House, urgently pressing upon it to follow the example of England and give France "that constitution which is generally loved by all classes of which the English nation is composed."

But all his audience was hostile. Some of it saw in the proposal an anti-national conspiracy between the proposer and the King, and others, more shrewdly, perceived that of any ministry in which Mirabeau had a place at all, be it nominally the lowest, he would really be ruler and chief.

Then Lajuinais, the young deputy for Rheims, proposed that it should be illegal for any member of the Assembly to hold office under the Crown, or for six months after the resignation of such membership.

It did not need Mirabeau's "dazzling prescience" to see that that measure was directed especially against himself; nor, with that cloud of suspicion that hung over him, to know that it would pass; and that passed, it would smash at a single blow the best means for "procuring a reform without revolution," his finest hope for the peaceful regeneration of France. He set his back to the wall, and, in one

of his most famous improvisations, played the losing game with the dauntless vigour of his soul.

"I cannot believe that the author of the motion can seriously wish it to be decided that the elected of the nation cannot make a good ministry—that the confidence given by the nation to a citizen ought to exclude him from the confidence of the King . . . that it can really be thought better that the King should choose his ministers from the valets of the Court than from the representatives of the people. . . . I cannot believe it, because I cannot believe an absurdity."

He finished by moving an amendment—which showed to his audience the largeness of his own soul, and that he had read the littleness of theirs—in which he demanded that he himself should be excluded from the ministry "if, at the price of my exclusion, I can keep for this Assembly the hope of seeing some of its members . . . become the intimate advisers of the nation and the King."

His generosity was not rewarded. On November 7th, Lajuinais's measure was carried, and, in the words of Lamartine, "France was deprived of the reconstructive services of the greatest political genius modern times have brought forth."

With a great scowl on his ugliness, and despair—but never the lethargy of despair—in his heart, Mirabeau turned to try again a means to his end, already tried and found wanting—Monsieur.

In spite of the Comte de Provence's chilling answer to that Preface to the *Notes for the Court,* Mirabeau had kept in touch with him through La Marck and through a certain Duc de Lévis, who, very con-

veniently, was a member of the Assembly as well as captain of Provence's guards. Now, with their help and for a while, Mirabeau put his baffled energies into a scheme for a ministry of which Monsieur was to be chief *en titre,* and Mirabeau in reality: Monsieur, figurehead and mouthpiece, and Mirabeau, secret brains and tongue. For an hour it seemed as if, in Mirabeau's able hand, the blunt tool might work. But his lucky star was not in the ascendant.

On December 24th or 25th, the Marquis de Favras, a handsome, gallant, and hot-headed royalist, was arrested on the charge of having sought to raise thirty thousand men to assassinate Lafayette and cut off the food of the capital. Provence was the intimate of Favras; and intimate surely means accomplice! What likelihood, then, that the country would accept a ministry with Provence at its head? "Hell has unchained all its calumnies against Monsieur and every one who seems to be attached to him," Mirabeau wrote bitterly to La Marck, who was in the Low Countries.

Yet another way of salvation for France and royalty was blocked—and Mirabeau knew the ways were few and narrow.

The year 1789, which had opened with the noisy *esclandre* of the publication of the *Letters to Cerutti* —the year which was certainly the most crowded and dramatic in the history of modern France as in the life of Mirabeau—closed for him in a sombre melancholy, and in all the wretchedness of forced inaction. All his weapons had failed him. Necker "would lose ten empires rather than wound his vanity." Lafayette, who had indeed tepidly sup-

ported him on the ministry question, was more "fatally undecided" than ever.

In the Assembly, which in November had moved from the Archbishop's Palace to the Salle de Manège —a huge, ill-warmed, ill-ventilated place, which stood where the Rue de Rivoli now joins the Rue Castiglione—Mirabeau was continually opposed by the powerful triumvirate—Duport, Barnave, and Lameth—of whom it was well said that Duport thought, Barnave spoke, and Lameth acted. The sittings were as ill-governed as they had been at Versailles, and, with an interrupting audience, consisting chiefly of the rabble of Paris, with orange-girls calling their wares, and the speakers forced to shout to make themselves heard above the din, were certainly no soothing *milieu*. Mirabeau's friends in the House were not less—nay, were more—dangerous and difficult than his foes, for in them his wisdom had to curb that fatal impatience of the idealist, which a modern statesman has declared to be responsible for some of the most tragic pages of human history. Add to this, that the unsanitary condition of the Riding-School caused his health to go from bad to worse, so that he wrote of himself to the absent La Marck as being condemned to "leeches, blisters, and the devil." He spoke seldom at this time, and when he did, briefly, coldly, and bitterly.

The anarchy in the country which ushered in the new year could hardly deepen the profundity of his discouragement. It was not lightened by the King's forced, formal consent, made in February, to the things established by the Revolution, or by the emotional Gallic joy of the people at that consent.

Worse still was the attitude of the King, of the whole royal family, towards Mirabeau himself.

It has been said that the biography of a bad man can by no means serve the interests of morality. That statement is disproved by the life of Mirabeau. It was Madame de Staël who found that she had never committed a sin which had not been the cause of a sorrow. But in Mirabeau's case, his vices were his worldly ruin as well—the eternal hamper on his genius, the fatal drag on his career as publicist and as statesman, the millstone ever about his neck. Dumont says that "he felt so strongly that if he had been personally respected, all France would have been at his feet, that . . . he would have gone through fire to have purified the name of Mirabeau. I have seen him weep, half suffocated with sorrow, when he said, 'I have cruelly expiated the sins of my youth.'" Lucas de Montigny remembered the poignant remorse of his exclamation: "The sins of my youth have cost the Revolution dear!" While yet another witness records his passionate ejaculation: "What could I not have done if I had had the virtue of Malesherbes!"

Mirabeau's sins did not perhaps lose his country, but they spoilt some of her best chances of salvation.

What wonder that the King persistently shunned alliance with a man whose vice he was too good not to loathe, and whose sagacity he was too stupid to appreciate; that even Marie-Antoinette, with her clearer intelligence, held proudly aloof from salvation through this horrible person? But, in this spring of 1790, it became clear to her, if not to her husband, that they were indeed "reduced" to what

she had spoken of to La Marck, a very few months earlier, as "the painful necessity of a recourse to Mirabeau." The royal family were by now practically prisoners in the Tuileries—with the Assembly, which only one man dared defy, daily robbing them of some new prerogative: and the mob a daily danger to their very existence.

Early in March, Mercy-Argenteau, the Queen's guardian—something between an old fox and an old woman—was bidden by, or bade, the Queen recall the Comte de la Marck from the Low Countries, to act as the emissary between royalty and the Comte de Mirabeau. La Marck arrived in Paris on March 16th. On the 17th, he had an interview with Mirabeau; and two days later with Mercy-Argenteau.

One morning, early in April, Mirabeau admitted himself, with La Marck's private key, to the garden of La Marck's house in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and there, secretly, had a long interview with Mercy-Argenteau and La Marck. The day following, La Marck met Marie-Antoinette in the room of Madame Thibaut, her *femme de chambre,* and warmly recommended to her and to the King the services of his friend. It required all La Marck's prestige and assurances to convince them that Mirabeau had not secretly promoted the insurrection of October 5th and 6th. La Marck told Mirabeau of that suspicion when he saw him the next day, and records how profoundly Mirabeau was moved. His face changed; "he became yellow, green, hideous. The horror he felt was striking." But the means had come to disprove that calumny. La Marck was charged by the King to command Mirabeau to suggest in writing the

means by which he could save the King's person, his throne, and his country.

Many critics are of the opinion that, in that *Letter to the King,* dated May 10, 1790, Mirabeau reached the high-water mark of his political genius, as of his eloquence.

Goaded by the maddening inactivity of the past months, by the fatal measure of November 7th, by the knowledge of the mistrust with which the Court regarded him, and by the crueller knowledge that that mistrust had not been unjustified; spurred by the proud and splendid aim of being the saviour of his country: Mirabeau did put into it all that was best in his heart and his mind, and in words of touching earnestness laid his services and his wisdom at the feet of his master. He did not indeed fail to make it perfectly clear that the only king he would help would be a king who would ally himself to the national cause, and become the chief of the reforming party; and that to assist a royalist counter-revolution to re-seat an absolute monarch upon his throne was the last thing in the world to which he would lend himself.

"I should hate to take any part, at this time of confusion, if I were not convinced that the legitimate authority of the King is the first need of France, and the only means of saving her. . . . I pledge myself to do my utmost, and to use all my influence to serve the real interests of the King; and, lest this assertion seem too vague, I declare that I believe a counter-revolution to be as dangerous and criminal, as I find chimeric in France the hope or project of any government without a chief . . . en-

dowed with the necessary powers for the execution of the law."

He went on to state that he should require two months to prepare men's minds, and "win the allegiance of sober citizens"; that he proposed to establish "influential correspondences in every department," and then begged that his "conduct might not be judged by a single action or a single speech," but by its general trend and intention.

"I promise to the King loyalty, zeal, activity, and a courage of which the world has little idea. . . . He would be a strange man who could be indifferent to the glory of saving the State and its chief: and I am not such a man."

The King and Queen were warmly delighted with this letter. As for Mirabeau, the deep cloud of gloom and uselessness, which had threatened to envelop him, was rolled away.

From the first, two things were essential with regard to Mirabeau's services to royalty—they must be secret, and they must be paid—secret, because an Assembly which had made a law especially to prevent Mirabeau from becoming *a* minister, would certainly not tolerate him as *the* minister; and paid, because he was as deeply in debt as ever, and because his work for the King would rob him of the time for lucrative work (such as the conduct of his paper) for himself. It was therefore at once arranged that the secret should be kept between the principal parties concerned; they having as go-betweens La Marck, Mercy-Argenteau, Mirabeau's secretary Comps, and Fontanges, Archbishop of Toulouse, once almoner of Marie-Antoinette, whom Lamartine describes as

"the hidden hand which passed to the Court Mirabeau's advice, and to Mirabeau the subsidies of the Court."

The question which is still as the glove thrown down between Mirabeau's enemies and his friends is not, then, if he received such subsidies, because that is established beyond the shadow of a doubt, but if, in receiving them, he sold his honour—or his honourable service.

"Greatly venal!" His foes, contemporary and posthumous, remembering the eternal debts and duns of his youth, the miserable shifts for money which his constant lawsuits had made public property, the nipping poverty of his life in Berlin, and last, and worst of all, the shameful sale of the *Secret History*, assumed and assume, not unnaturally, that the money he received from the Court was a bribe, and that he tried to save monarchy because it paid him well.

One of the most satisfactory answers to these accusations will be found in a comparison of his early writings and opinions, when he had nothing to gain by monarchical principles, with his later writings when such principles served his interest. Though he spoke and wrote often under the influence of the violent mood of the moment, and was swayed to one side or to the other by great gusts of passion, as the strong tree sways to the tempest, and is yet firm at the roots, so it will be found that, throughout his life, the basis of the creed of the author of the *Essay on Despotism* and of the *Notes for the Court* is the same.

But the best vindication of his honour lies, after all, in these *Notes* themselves. If he had been clear

and honest in the expression of his principles in his *Memoir for Monsieur* and his *Letter to the King*, the *Notes for the Court* proper contain the plainest speaking it was ever royalty's good chance to hear and folly to disobey. That any fair-minded man can read them, and think that the author of those unwelcome prophecies, of those bold upbraidings, and those unpalatable injunctions, was truckler and time-server, is difficult to believe.

Lafayette, not likely to be a too partial judge, did not so see them. In his Memoirs, he declares that "Mirabeau was not inaccessible to money, but for no sum would he have sustained an opinion destructive to his liberty and dishonourable to his mind."

As for Mirabeau's friends, who certainly knew his worst as well as his best, they defended him to a man. Sir Samuel Romilly declared that those who said he could be bribed did him "very great injustice." Hugh Elliot declared him "incorruptible" in the sense that he would never sell his convictions. Dumont, his closest but never his favourable intimate, says plainly that he took the money of Monsieur and of the King "for governing them, and not for being governed by them." And La Marck summed up the whole case when he told Lafayette that Mirabeau was "paid—to be of his real opinion."

The amount of that payment has, of course, no bearing on his honour or dishonour in receiving it; but it had a great bearing on his circumstances and his spirits. When he heard that the King was going to allow him 208,000 francs for the payment of his debts besides a monthly allowance of 6000 livres, and 300 francs per month to Comps, he was as delighted

as a schoolboy with a lavish tip in his pocket. He found good qualities in his Majesty which he had never discovered before. Not all La Marck's entreaties for prudence, and earnest arguments that on secret pay it would be the height of folly to appear suddenly and blatantly rich, could prevent this rash payee from immediately giving up his rooms in the dingy *hôtel garni* in the Rue Traversière, and buying in the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin, then a new, wealthy, and fashionable quarter of Paris, a house where, in 1785, he had often been the guest of Julie Carreau, afterwards Madame Talma. Further, he must needs add to his household, which consisted solely of his servant Legrain, a valet, a cook, coachman, and horses. As for the debts, he characteristically troubled exceedingly little about them.

He took the royal payment, indeed, with the boisterous joyousness and *bonhomie* which not all the cruelties of fate could crush out of his lighter nature.

For the work for which that payment was made—the salvation and reformation of France and of her monarchy—he reserved all the wisdom and the profound seriousness of his soul.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE INTERVIEW WITH THE QUEEN AND THE CHÂTELET INQUIRY

On May 15th, Montmorin informed the Assembly that Spain had asked France to furnish fourteen ships of the line to assist the Spanish to turn out the English settlers, whom Spanish men-of-war had discovered at Nootka Sound, a harbour in Vancouver, claimed by Spain.

Alexandre de Lameth rose at once to ask the pregnant question—whether the Right of declaring Peace and War henceforth belonged to the King? For four days the debate raged. Mirabeau heard, and said nothing. On the fifth day, he declared his opinion that the King had this right, but—to be sure, it was a very large But—that it rested with the Assembly to vote, or not to vote, the supplies with which war could be carried on.

The fluent Barnave answered Mirabeau, on May 21st, declaring the decision should lie, not with the King, but with the nation, speaking through the Assembly. Mirabeau—who once drily observed of Barnave's copious fluency that "facility in speech is one of the most beautiful gifts of nature, provided you do not use it"—listened irritably to the young

orator's pleasing periods and faulty arguments, made a few notes, and then, rising impetuously—"I have had enough!"—went out with Frochot into the gardens of the Tuileries, where he talked on indifferent subjects with various acquaintances; among others, "with an air of gallantry the most witty and the most agreeable," with that irrepressible and ubiquitous woman, Madame de Staël.

But if he could dismiss the subject for the moment from his mind, not so Paris. The gutter-press had whipped the emotions of the mob into a seething sea of rage against the party which desired the right for the King. Pamphlets were scattered broadcast, inciting the people to civil war in the event of it being given to him; Barnave was lauded to the skies; the vengeance of heaven was called down on Mirabeau's head, and the very tree in the Tuileries gardens marked where he shall hang!

The day following, he went to the Assembly, through a furious crowd of fifty thousand men waiting in a fever of excitement the debate of the day. As he passed, some shrieked "À la lanterne!" and hawkers were loudly selling a pamphlet entitled *Detected Treason of the Comte de Mirabeau*, couched in the most lurid language. "Beware lest the people distil in your viper's mouth of gold a burning nectar to quench your thirst for ever: take care that they do not march with your head, as they did with Foulon's, with his mouth full of straw!"

But to Mirabeau danger was at once incentive and sedative. When he reached the crowded Assembly, a colleague turned to him with, "What, Mirabeau, yesterday the Capitol and to-day the Tarpeian

Rock!" He took that phrase, and the libel being hawked in the streets without, as the text of his answer to Barnave's speech of the day before. With the noble self-control which he so often possessed in as great a measure as a statesman for his country as he always lacked it as a man for himself, he made a speech of the most dignified and excellent reasoning—a speech at once careful and inspired—proved his point to the Right as to the Left, and descended from the tribune, says the Marquis de Ferrières, "to the sound of redoubled applause, leaving spite and confusion on the face of Barnave and the Lameths, and hatred and vengeance in their hearts."

With but slight modification, his motion was carried, the right of decision was voted to lie with the King, and in the case which had given rise to the debate Spain's request was refused, and France was spared a naval war with England.

As he came out of the Assembly, Mirabeau met Camille Desmoulins, who passionately and fiercely accused him of being in the pay of the Court. Mirabeau replied with a smile and an invitation to Desmoulins to dine at his house—"where I will answer you." The argument was the one the young demagogue had found so convincing at Versailles, "a most excellent dinner."

Two days after this Peace and War speech, as its sequel, Mirabeau proposed that a committee should be formed, from among the members of the Assembly, to examine the existing treaties between France and other powers, and to look into foreign affairs generally. He was elected reporter of this Diplomatic Committee, and in that capacity became, in addition

to all his other *rôles,* practically, though certainly not *en titre,* Minister of Foreign Affairs: a position in which he showed his vast grasp alike of history and of contemporary politics.

When he heard of the death of Benjamin Franklin—it occurred on April 17, 1790, but the news, of course, did not reach the Assembly until many weeks later—he showed to it yet another side of his nature; spoke, not from his head, but his heart, and gave evidence of that in his character which makes him, from first to last, "invincibly sympathetic."

"Gentlemen, Franklin is dead. The genius who enfranchised America and poured streams of light over Europe, has returned to the breast of God. . . . The etiquette of courts has long enough insisted on hypocritical grief. Nations should wear mourning only for their benefactors." He went on to suggest that the Assembly, representing "free and enlightened France," should for three days give that mark of respect to the memory of "one of the greatest men who ever served philosophy and liberty."

On June 1st, Mirabeau passed to the Tuileries the first of those *Notes for the Court* proper, which, on his death-bed, he declared to be "My justification and my glory . . . where one can see my views, my plan, my soul, and my genius."

Their honesty of purpose, and that fidelity which, as Mirabeau himself puts it in one of them, "consists in knowing how to displease in order to serve," have already been spoken of. They contain also the finest proof of his practical sagacity as a statesman—a feasible, working scheme for a new regenerated France. Here, amid the crash of the falling ruins

of the old *régime,* he lays the foundations, not of the impossible Utopia of a Lafayette or a Condorcet, but of a new practicable order, faulty with its faults acknowledged, but at least realisable here and now.

Many a time, like Chatham, he "dives into futurity," and the history of his country is the justification of his *rôle* of prophet. On this page is a "rugged maxim hewn from life"; on the next, one of those tremendous word-pictures which "froze the Court with terror," or a full, great call, like the sound of the last trump, to rouse it from its "deplorable lethargy." More often, the style has the careful simplicity with which a parent instructs a child; sometimes even the explanatory reiteration of a patient person teaching a stupid.

The ordinary reader, who wishes to know something, but not too much, of the redundant Mirabeau in his writings, had better select this *Correspondence of Mirabeau and the Comte de la Marck* (*Correspondance entre Mirabeau et le Comte de la Marck*), under which title Bacourt has preserved all the *Notes for the Court* which have survived, for they not only give the best of Mirabeau's genius and character as politician and man, but they are in matter the most interesting and in manner the most concise and lucid of all his works.

The First of the *Notes* contains his own Apologia and a cry, which is the burden of many of them, "Beware Lafayette!"

Since their interview at Passy, in October, 1789, the *rapports* between Mirabeau and "Cromwell-Grandison" had been constant and many. The decree that Deputies cannot be Ministers had not made

it less necessary for Mirabeau to win to his side the ambition, the virtues, and the popularity of the chief of the National Guard. In April, then, behold the Comte making fresh, seductive overtures. You want me, and I want you! Your charm and name and grace need my capacities—my dash and impetus, your virtues. "Me voilà! Unissons-nous!" That, says Sainte-Beuve, was the situation. Lafayette owns generously in his *Memoirs* that he was wrong to refuse Mirabeau's offers of alliance. Mirabeau's pride was little likely to stomach the disdain for his vices which the good Lafayette showed in that refusal.

In that *Note for the Court* of June 1st, the writer speaks of Lafayette as the "rival of the King"; in a later *Note,* he is declared to be "equally ambitious and incapable," "busy getting himself made *generalissimo.*" The Queen must tell Lafayette that "he must ally himself with Mirabeau, the one statesman in the country." It was all in vain. The breach widened daily. Mirabeau was bitterly offended when, a few weeks later, Lafayette refused to vote for him to be President of the Assembly during the Feast of the Federation: and Mirabeau turned to warn the Court again against Lafayette's charming incompetence, to suggest that he should be placed only in such situations where he would be showy but not powerful—"make him edit a newspaper," for instance: "if it is successful, the Court will profit by it; if not, the disfavour will rest on Lafayette."

From the first to the last, it seems that Lafayette, with his calmer mind, judged Mirabeau more fairly than Mirabeau's fierce impatience with the limitations of that mind allowed Mirabeau to judge him.

But from first to last, the pair were innately antagonistic. Between Lafayette, with his high and narrow soul, his character stiff rather than strong, and Mirabeau, with his large, coarse nature and his vast powers, no real union was possible. Even if Lafayette's morality had been of that " stouter stuff " of which Burke's was made, and, for the good of France, he could have ignored Mirabeau's vice, they could never have worked together. For the one man lived in the land of dreams, the other in the land of facts; and in times of stress and storm, such as the time of the Great Revolution, no bridge will hold between those shores.

The nobles, having lost the substance of their power on August 4, 1789, were robbed of the very shadow of it on June 19, 1790. Mirabeau, who had carefully avoided taking part in the " Bartholomew of Privileges," was not in the House when the decrees were passed forbidding to his order the use of its titles, family names, servants' liveries, and coats-of-arms.

One story runs how, on this day, he took his valet by the ear with, " Look here, sirrah, take care that to you I am always M. le Comte! "

Presently, with the money he received from the Court, he had the Mirabeau arms emblazoned on his carriage, and his servants put into the Mirabeau liveries.

Loménie tells the story of his returning from the National Assembly with Frochot one day, when some members of the Right had been vaunting their noble origin and the services rendered by their fathers. " Can these people really believe," asks the young

Burgundian scornfully, "that they are of different blood from other men?" "No doubt of it," answers Gabriel-Honoré de Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau; then, after a very long pause, "Believe me, it is an error much more difficult to cure than you suppose."

"Tribun par calcul, aristocrate par goût," Necker called the great orator in one happy phrase; and in another, Lamartine declares that "the Revolution was only in his mind, royalism was in his blood."

The very fact that royalism was in his blood was to help the Revolution now.

The Abolition of Titles had started afresh—indeed, it was no wonder—in the mind of the royal family the fatal idea of flight from the kingdom.

The day following the decree, June 20th, Mirabeau wrote his Second *Note for the Court,* in which he once more begged its full trust and confidence in himself, and added a pregnant and famous phrase: "Le roi n'a qu'un homme, c'est sa femme. . . . J'aime à croire qu'elle ne voudrait pas de la vie sans sa couronne, mais, ce dont je suis bien sûr, c'est qu'elle ne conservera plus sa vie si elle ne conserve pas sa couronne." And finally, "The crisis is at hand: no more half trustings."

So far, Mirabeau had never met either the King he would save, nor "the only man about the King, his wife," but had conveyed his ideas through the *Notes,* or letters, or through conversations with the intermediaries, La Marck and Fontanges.

The hour had come for more direct measures.

On July 2d, he went to stay, as he often did, with his niece, Madame d'Aragon, at Passy. Very early in the morning of the following day, he took a

cabriolet, and with his nephew, young du Saillant, disguised and acting as a postilion, drove through the quiet summer lanes which then led from Passy to Saint-Cloud. At an unfrequented entrance to the park he left the cabriolet and his nephew: a door was mysteriously opened to admit him and closed again.

In a summer-house, in the highest part of the gardens of Saint-Cloud, Mirabeau met the Queen, alone.

It was nineteen years since he had first seen her, when, as a boy of two-and-twenty, his father had introduced him to the Court of Louis XV. Then, she had been a very young, giddy, charming, and irresponsible girl, whose worst trouble was the long faces that tiresome Mercy-Argenteau pulled over her escapades, or the maternal scoldings his ill reports brought her from Vienna. And now!

There are many for whom Marie-Antoinette's sorrows blot out all her sins: and others for whom her sins blot out all her sorrows. Yet, in truth, she was neither saint nor sinner, but a not extraordinary woman, in whom trouble was the touchstone to bring out the courage and resolution of which in happier times she had had no need, whose failing and whose virtue was pride, and who was always intelligent, but only rarely wise.

She was five-and-thirty years old now, with her beauty dimmed by many cares and terrors. One story has it—there are several differing versions—that when she first saw the man who she believed had "led a band of outlaws to assassinate" the royal family at Versailles, she drew back with "a movement of horror." That passed. Mirabeau would not have

been Mirabeau if, when he had talked to her for a while, he had not made her disbelieve everything she had had against him, and forgive him the masterful assertion of his manner, and the loud faults in taste which the polite company at the Prince de Poix's had found so much more unpardonable than breaches of morals, and which might well have jarred on a woman brought up among the dainty and dapper manikins of the old Court.

No courtier this! But he won her, as he won everybody. His cleverness found and acknowledged hers. Her brave and high spirit responded to his. She spoke afterwards of the deep impression he made upon her. He himself alluded to the interview with a profound feeling, and often to her grace, her dignity, and her charm. Before they parted, it is said that he raised her hand to his lips: "Madame, the monarchy is saved!"

What is certain, is that the interview left him with a yet more resolute determination to serve her: that he imbued her with his master idea, of making the National party the King's party, and that his influence upon her mind can be traced long after his death. It is certain, too, that, after this meeting, the *Notes to the Court* were very often addressed, not in reality to the King at all, but to "the only man he had about him."

In his Seventh *Note,* he had appealed to her good sense to permit the return of Orléans, because "we cannot prevent it, and it is always a great mistake to command unless one can insist on obedience." Receive him with open arms. "To serve him is to weaken him; to manage him, to kill him and his

party." As a first-fruits of the meeting at Saint-Cloud, her Majesty did as she was bid.

But, if the Queen was no longer an obstacle in the way of Mirabeau's plan for her salvation and the salvation of her house, the King remained his own worst enemy.

On the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, July 14th, "all the world went mumming" to the Feast of the Federation in the Champ de Mars, and took the oath of fidelity to the nation, the law, the monarchy, and the new constitution. Lafayette was the hero of the day, with an ascendancy Mirabeau's jealous and angry eyes saw to be infinitely dangerous to the power and the prestige of the King. He did not hesitate to rate his Majesty well in the Eleventh *Note for the Court* for putting himself in a "terrible position," and once more earnestly advocated, as he advocated in the *Memoir for Monsieur,* that the royal family should leave, not the country, but the capital.

But, besides King, Queen, and Lafayette, Mirabeau had still on his hands—or in his way—Necker.

Since his famous speech on the Bankruptcy in September, 1789, when he had defended Necker's wild scheme of a huge voluntary income-tax as a means of staving off national ruin, Mirabeau had never addressed the House on matters of finance, and seldom met and quarrelled—for Mirabeau and Necker to meet and to quarrel were synonymous terms—with the Genevan banker. Meanwhile, the financial condition of the kingdom went from bad to worse under the charge of the minister whom, on August 4th, Mirabeau described, with his usual vigour, to Major Mauvillon as being "as false as

he is cowardly, and incapable of forgiving, even to save himself, the services I had rendered to the State."

By the end of the month Mirabeau could contain himself no longer, and in the Assembly on August 27th, in a long speech, written by Reybaz and only touched up by Mirabeau himself, attacked Necker as he had first attacked him in the *Letters to Cerutti* on that system of Paper-money, which was Necker's forlorn hope for the financial salvation of France.

But that "extremity" which is "the trier of spirits," had tried Necker and found him wanting, and he was not so much beaten by Mirabeau, as by a destiny too high and difficult for him. He announced his retirement, on the ancient, convenient plea of health, and the people, who had loved him, saw him go with complete indifference. As to the Court, Mirabeau impressed on it that it was losing "the author of all the misfortunes of the King and of all the difficulties of the situation."

He followed his fallen foe by another last speech on Paper-money, on September 27th, a speech which attains the unpleasing distinction of being, among many which are far too long, the longest Mirabeau ever uttered. It was a sort of chant of victory over Necker's grave. Yet Mirabeau was far from judging him unfairly. "A very good sort of man," a clever banker, but a narrow, a self-opinionated, and an incapable administrator.

"Malebranche saw all things in God," said Mirabeau, "and Necker sees all things in Necker." That is at once Necker's history, and his epitaph.

He was no sooner out of the way than Mirabeau found yet another bramble across his path.

The Court of the Châtelet—a court temporarily and especially appointed to try cases of high treason—had been long making judicial inquiry into the events of October 5 and 6, 1789—the Insurrection of Women, and the attack on the palace of Versailles. On August 7, 1790, the Châtelet declared to the Assembly that the evidence it had received inculpated two deputies: Orléans and Mirabeau.

A committee which the Assembly formed to examine this evidence decided that there was no real case against either of the suspected. But the suspicion lingered. In the minds of some of Mirabeau's biographers, notably of the able and painstaking Loménie, it lingers still.

It has already been seen with what sovereign contempt Mirabeau treated the accusation, first formed in the early summer of 1789, that he was engaged in a plot with Orléans to overset the King and place Orléans, having Mirabeau as "his right-hand man," upon the throne. It has been shown, too, that if Mirabeau's spoken rage and disdain prove nothing, the calibre of his mind proves much: and that if he was not too scrupulous to ally himself with Orléans, he was too clever. The argument of his certain poverty when Orléans's gold was supposed to be showering upon him has also been adduced. But it can be further added that Dumont especially says that *he* knew of no plot. If there had been a plot, the Genevese, ever by Mirabeau's side, surely would have known it. If he had known, being Dumont, he would have said. Dumont also adds, very truly, that Mirabeau was, from his passionate and intractable character, little fit for coalitions. Mounier remarks, also

justly, that it was not in Mirabeau's power to be silent about his projects. Lafayette, Rivarol, Mallet du Pan, who were all, as Mounier was, Mirabeau's enemies, exonerate him from this charge.

Nor does the ground of the suspicions bear examination. Mirabeau was intimately acquainted with Camille Desmoulins, as well as with Orléans. Certainly! and the innate improbability of his being the follower of a Desmoulins is as great as of his being the coadjutor of an Orléans. He had advance knowledge of the attack upon Versailles. He had! but no more the guilty knowledge of a conspirator than that which prompted the flight of many royalists before the coming of that great and terrible day. In his account of its events in the *Courrier de Provence* he glossed over its excess. True! as he had done in his account of the taking of the Bastille. But one may have sympathy with greatly provoked rebellions without being a rebel; and in both cases, surely, the situation urgently required soothing, not agitating.

With the other suspicions he dealt in detail himself.

On September 11th, in the Assembly, he had to defend his reputation from the accusation of having assisted by certain letters, written in cypher, a reactionary and anti-revolution plot: and now, on October 2d, he must deny the charge of having encouraged such a revolution in collusion with a mob! The thing is absurd—contemptible. "It is not to defend myself I mount this tribune. . . . I do not consider myself accused; still, as here I am, I will condescend to enlighten you on a few doubtful points."

The charge that, on the afternoon of October 5, 1789, two witnesses had seen him, in the distinctive dress of a deputy, with a drawn sword in his hand, inciting the regiment of Flanders (then drawn up in the Place d'Armes) to rebellion, he haughtily dismissed as a "ridiculous accusation" which "can only be a caricature." Certainly, if this was ever the method of a secret conspirator, it was never the method of a secret conspirator of the mental capacity of Mirabeau; while it must be added that a third witness did not recognise the large man with the drawn sword to be Mirabeau at all; and a fourth was quite sure the individual was the Comte de Gamaches—so the only person who need be troubled, says Mirabeau, is Gamaches—at being mistaken for any one so ugly as myself!

Besides, if it were needed to prove an alibi, I can prove it. It is not only Mirabeau who declares, but also the Comte de la Marck—who was the friend of royalty before he was the friend of Mirabeau, and throughout a most honourable gentleman—that he and Mirabeau spent that afternoon of the 5th together, studying the map of Brabant. "We did not know," says La Marck, "what had been prepared for this very day."

Then, having swept away the miserable charges with a royal disdain, the accused became the accuser, and, as eight years ago at Pontarlier he had arraigned his judges on the irregularity of their proceedings against him, so now he turned the blast of his destructive criticism against the Court of the Châtelet, which had presumed to try him.

"Thus disappear these abominable suspicions, these

frightful calumnies, which assign a place among the most dangerous conspirators and the most abominable criminals to a man whose conscience tells him that he has always wished to be useful to his country, and that sometimes he has not been useless."

To that noble pride and feeling, a great part of the House and the spectators responded by rounds of applause, which lasted long after Mirabeau had regained his seat.

"The nobles, the bishops, the witnesses," says the Marquis de Ferrières, "remained in a dismal silence."

Not one among those ready and able enemies attempted to answer him. Is it unjust that posterity should draw the conclusion now, which the Assembly drew then, that he was unanswerable, and decree, as it decreed that day, that there was no case against him?

CHAPTER XXIV

"THE VIEW OF THE SITUATION OF FRANCE"

THE *Notes for the Court* poured at this time from Mirabeau's pen like water from a torrent, or rather —an apter analogy—spurted like flames from a furnace. The fire of his vehemence devoured him—his zeal indeed ate him up. It may have been that he knew the cause he had in hand to be verily desperate; or, perhaps, his diseased body warned the soul of their approaching parting—are not many so-called supernatural premonitions thus material in origin?—and he worked while it was yet day, as one on whom the night cometh.

Certain it is that, if the *Notes* might once have borne as motto the entreaty of Vivien, "Trust me not at all, or all in all!" they would now often have been more fitly prefixed with the imperious cry of Lady Macbeth, "Infirm of purpose! give me the daggers!"

Necker's retirement was the signal for Mirabeau to return to the fatal decision that Deputies cannot be Ministers—to bombard the King with warnings, arguments, entreaties, openly to attack that decree —ay, to choose those ministers from the members of the revolutionary Jacobin Club itself, for then, in a

famous phrase, "Des Jacobins ministres ne seraient pas des ministres Jacobins."

That move, which Mirabeau himself justly called "profoundly clever," was much too drastic and determined for a king who always recalls the refrain of the ballad:

J' voudrais ben . . . oui, mais . . .
J' n'ose pas;

and nothing was done.

Then Mirabeau again loudly warned his unhappy master of that national bankruptcy, of which "the strongest despotism could hardly sustain the shock; and despotism is over for ever in France." Another day, he turned once more to his scheme of a low-priced newspaper to mould public opinion; and yet another, while he scorned even to refer to the Inquiry of the Châtelet, he poured the vials of his wrath upon those ministers who had prompted it.

All the time he was working under the pressure of an ill-health daily growing worse. He would appear at the Assembly sometimes with the blood dripping down his face, as a consequence of the leeches which had been employed as a relief to the ophthalmia from which he suffered—a figure dreadful and repellent, and yet compelling and chaining attention. On October 18th he flashed from a sick-bed, "where I have just escaped death," a bitter *Note for the Court,* and a letter to La Marck containing more fury against it than he had ever expressed before.

There had been a mutiny among the sailors at Brest, which, with the approval of Mirabeau, Lafay-

ette and the majority of the Assembly, had been promptly and vigorously suppressed by an able and gallant commander, the Marquis de Bouillé. But the mob had come to be of that temper which brooks just punishment as little as revenge. Fifty thousand men went to the Assembly and demanded the overthrow of the ministry. The King took counsel, not with the able brain he was paying to work for him, but with a certain Bergasse, an ardent devotee of mesmerism, who advised him to commit what Mirabeau described as the "inept imprudence" of asking the *Assembly* to form a new ministry—thereby establishing a most dangerous precedent.

It was not only the wild folly of the idea itself that was enraging, but to think—to think that these people prefer the counsels of "this mesmeric idiot" to mine, and seek a remedy for their misfortunes, not from my sagacity, but from "the tripod of illumination!" "*I* shall never commit the folly of this Royal Cattle . . . when *I* recognise a man's enlightenment, straightforwardness, and devotion, I decide nothing serious without consulting him, and I do not consult him in order never to do what he recommends."

With this letter to La Marck, the sick man enclosed that Thirty-third *Note for the Court,* in which he implored the King, instead of asking the Assembly to form a ministry, to take so splendid an opportunity of doing what Mirabeau had been begging him to do for weeks—form one himself, and rid himself of those incompetent servants "who for six months have left the throne exposed to all dangers."

Those very passions which undermined Mirabeau's

strength, also gave it him, and, having thrown him on a sick-bed, roused him from it, to appear three days later, October 21st, in the Assembly and vent his wrath in a speech filled with the rage of an earlier Mirabeau against a monarchy so plainly and obstinately intent upon cutting its own throat.

He supported, against the furious opposition of the Right, the proposition of a deputy, Menou, that henceforth the tricoloured flag of the Revolution should replace the white emblem of the Bourbons, and finished with the suggestion—the famous suggestion—that in future the sailors on board his Majesty's ships, instead of cheering the King night and morning as they were wont, should change their "Vive le Roi!" to "Vive la Nation, la Loi, et le Roi!"—with his Majesty as number three.

As Mirabeau was speaking, Guilhermy, a member of the Right, had raised a cry of "Traitor, Assassin!" Then the impassioned and eloquent Cazalès, defending Guilhermy, hotly denounced Mirabeau's speech as incendiary. But all the winds blew Mirabeau's way. The Assembly carried all his propositions; and Guilhermy was put under arrest for three days.

The next morning, indeed, came reflections—and there are victories, as well as defeats, which make one regret that one fought.

In September, Mercy-Argenteau had left Paris. Fontanges, who remained with La Marck as sole intermediary between royalty and Mirabeau, declared plainly that, unless honour and duty bade him stay, he would have set a hundred miles between himself and the uncontrolled tempestuousness of Mirabeau's character. La Marck was in an even

less enviable position. The day after the speech, Mirabeau wrote him a letter—came to him as a naughty, wilful, and repentant schoolboy to a master, crying, Peccavi! Only, really, "I was not a demagogue yesterday. . . . I was a great citizen, and perhaps a clever orator. . . . I am the man for the establishment of order, but not for the re-establishment of the *old* order."

As *amende honorable* he wrote the Thirty-sixth *Note,* wherein he explained and defended to the Court his views on the ministry and on the affair of Brest, and, revolutionary speeches or no, assured it of his zeal and his "obstinate devotion."

Then he sealed his vows by vehement *Notes,* advising the Queen on the subject of the return to Paris of Lamotte, the shameful heroine of the affair of the Diamond Necklace—a return which Mirabeau considered to be an "execrable plot" to ruin her Majesty's reputation; ay, a paving of the way to the scaffold! "It made him leap with anger," says La Marck, "and redoubled his energies." Once more he was the Mirabeau of the garden of Saint-Cloud, with his lips on the royal hand, assuring the royal heart, with all the magic and sweetness in his nature, that, if he was sometimes violent and passionate, yet he was always true.

To be sure, his wrath flared up again in a moment. Bergasse still rankled.

In November, the Duc de Castries and Charles de Lameth had a duel, in which Lameth was wounded. The mob of Paris, with Lafayette and the National Guard looking on and not attempting to interfere, sacked the Hôtel de Castries on November 12th—

on the principle that Castries being a duke, he *must* be in the wrong.

The next day, in the House, at a stormy sitting, Mirabeau supported his enemy Lafayette in the matter, and voted against his conduct being made the subject of an inquiry, excused the excesses of the people, horrified the royalists, dismayed the moderates, and surprised the extremists. One of the members of the Right, the Marquis de Foucault, called out angrily, "M. de Mirabeau always attacks me with ironies!" and Mirabeau flung back at him, "Since you do not like irony, I hurl at you my profoundest contempt."

The next day came soberness and regret, as they had come before. Fontanges wrung his hands again over such a servant of royalty as this. Poor La Marck was once more busy soothing the outraged feelings of the Court—the Count is certainly inexcusable, but we must excuse him because we cannot do without him; or, to put it differently, What a man! yet the only man to save us! Then he turned to Mirabeau himself—Mirabeau, who was loudly contrite for what, in fact, is most simply and sensibly explained as an outburst of temper—one of his Riquetti lapses from self-control—besought his "indulgence" for masters who "desired the end without the means"; who *had* dallied with a Bergasse when they might have closed with a Mirabeau.

But the Court remained haughty and unforgiving. Changes were made in the ministry, but they were small and unimportant. Mirabeau eagerly besought another interview with the Queen—one can say in

ten minutes what one cannot write in as many folios! —but she did not even try to remove the obstacles in the way of such a meeting. Then he wrote a *Note,* the Forty-second, of decidedly lame excuses for his conduct. Sometimes the wind veered a little in his favour. Sometimes royalty was merely inert and torpid. It never could declare, with Witwould in *The Way of the World,* "I don't stand shill I, shall I . . . if I say 't, I 'll do 't"; and Mirabeau had again the bitterness of knowing that that shilly-shallying and "half-trust" were, in part, his own fault—that what he had been for ever hampered what he was.

From November 17th to December 4th he had no communication with royalty.

But if his proud and dominant nature could ill brook that neglect, it was certainly a thousand times more disastrous to the served than to the servant. It was only by a very few Mirabeau was known or suspected to be adviser to the Tuileries: in the eyes of the whole world he was the ruler of that famous Assembly which ruled all, the greatest statesman, nay, as he had said himself, the only statesman, in France, and with a fame that increased daily by leaps and bounds.

In this autumn, Hugh Elliot, the diplomatist, came to Paris as the emissary of Pitt, and with the especial intention of winning the supremely powerful favour of his old schoolmate for the Great Commoner and for Great Britain. To be sure, he did not wholly succeed. After his visit Mirabeau spoke often with a concentrated bitterness of Pitt. On his death-bed he defined Pitt as the "minister of prepara-

tions. He governs by what he threatens rather than by what he does. If I had lived, I think I should have given him trouble."

Then Mirabeau saw yet another seal set upon his greatness. On November 30th, he was made President of the Jacobin Club.

The outbreak of the Revolution was the signal for the rise of that "Clubbism" which Carlyle declared to be "a sure symptom of Social Unrest." The revolutionary clubs were political societies in which men of a party gathered together, and in some cases —certainly in the case of the Jacobin Club—consulted and decided on the speeches to be made and the plan of action to be adopted at the Assembly, "so that," says Arthur Young, "whatever passes in this Club is almost sure to pass in the Assembly." At first, while the Parliament sat at Versailles, the Jacobin Club was named the Breton Club, was for Breton members only, and of very moderate views. In Paris it rented the chapter or refectory of the Jacobin convent (which stood in the Rue Saint-Honoré, where the Rue du Marché Saint-Antoine is now situated), acquired its title of Jacobin, largely increased in size and importance, started a newspaper of its own, and became the parent of other Jacobin Clubs, which sprang up rapidly all over France. Its principles quickly grew more revolutionary. Duport, Barnave, and the two Lameths were "the guiding spirits of its youth."

Mirabeau, who had been a member of it since the end of 1789, abandoned it temporarily in July, 1790 for the "Society of 1789," a club formed to support constitutional monarchy. But it wasted its wits and

its vigour in philosophic speculation, and died a natural death.

Early in November, Mirabeau returned to the Jacobins, and added to the labour and excitement of his life by constantly attending its meetings, which took place every other day. He hoped its presidency would lead to the greater presidency of the Assembly itself. But, for a while, the hope was vain. As President of the Jacobins, he thundered diatribes against Lafayette, in which were to be heard, no doubt—for into his most savage hatreds there crept to the last that strange note of understanding and pardon—something very like pity for his enemy's impossible *rôle* of "republican jailer of the King."

His thoughts were, indeed, soon turned to new burning questions.

Aix and Marseilles flamed into bloody riot, which this very human Gabriel-Honoré must needs attribute to the feeble government of that obscure person, M. d'André, who had been elected President of the Assembly in place of Mirabeau himself. Whatever the cause may have been, things in Provence undoubtedly were so serious that Mirabeau had actually obtained his passport to Aix, and had sworn to make Marseilles submit as he made her submit before, "or I will perish."

But if his strong brain and heart were needed in the South, in Paris they had become absolutely necessary.

The King *had* now changed almost all his ministers, but, in spite of Mirabeau's prayers and warnings, he had filled their places with Lafayette's men, so that Montmorin, who remained Minister for Foreign

Affairs, was, as Governor Morris put it, "the only piece of the old coat which had held out."

Montmorin, who though honest and devoted to royalty remained as weak as water and, said La Marck, could only be brought to use his faculties when in leading-strings like a child, found his solitary position altogether untenable. He therefore conveniently forgot, or ignored, that it was not yet two years since he had warned the Comte de Mirabeau never to darken his doors again, and proposed to La Marck, through a certain Talon and Duquesnoy, who were deserters from the camp of Lafayette, a coalition with Mirabeau.

Before La Marck told Mirabeau of the proposal, he consulted the Queen personally and wrote to Mercy-Argenteau. The Queen's opinion of Montmorin was low and shrewd. "He means well, but he means it feebly," was what Governor Morris said and her Majesty thought. But Montmorin was at least loyal, the Tuileries had few faithful followers, some one was sorely needed to fill Mercy-Argenteau's place, and what might not be hoped from a Montmorin's good faith backed by the resource and determination of Mirabeau?

When the proposal was made to Mirabeau, he accepted at once. Yet again for the sake of his country, he cast away his clinging and stubborn pride. The King was now mournfully studying the history of Charles I., seeing the aptness of the analogy to his own case, and doing nothing at all. The Queen had a far more practical, but still a very imperfect, realisation of the perils of their situation. As for Mirabeau, in these weeks when he had per-

force stood by with tongue and hands tied, he had horrified La Marck with the realistic prophecy that the day was coming when the mob would kick the dead bodies of its rulers.

In the Forty-fifth *Note for the Court,* when, on December 4th, he resumed his correspondence with it, he solemnly and fearfully warned it, face to face, that the hour was indeed at hand when no remedy would be possible, and when the kingdom as well as the King would perish in the general conflagration. As a last hope, he spoke of his proposed coalition with Montmorin. They met on December 5th. The next day, in his forty-sixth *Note,* Mirabeau described the interview, not perhaps exactly as it was, but as it ought to have been, put into Montmorin's mouth a wisdom that mediocre mind could never have conceived, and bold words those trembling lips would never have dared to utter.

The Court approved. Montmorin stepped into Mercy-Argenteau's vacant post of intermediary, and Mirabeau's relations with the Court were fully and firmly re-established.

After nearly twenty days' labour, he had worked out that great scheme which, as the Forty-seventh *Note for the Court,* occupies ninety pages in Bacourt's collection, but which Mirabeau himself entitled, in a phrase which embodies the chief aim of his career as a statesman, *A View of the Situation of France, and the Means of Reconciling Public Liberty with Royal Authority.*

As in that first exuberance of his hot young genius, the *Essay on Despotism,* there is to be found something of the maturity and the profundity of the states-

man, so in this *View*—the last great written effort of his latter days—there is to be found something of the glow, the energy, the passion—ay, even something of the sanguineness of his youth. To be old is to outlive one's hopes; and Mirabeau died young.

Though he had declared to the Court but a few weeks earlier that its lethargy and its folly had tempted him to hide his head in his cloak, "to shut out the sight of evils against which all my zeal was helpless, and which it will soon be out of my power to prevent," yet in the *View,* despite the awful picture it paints of the fate in store for the empire and its rulers if its warnings and its counsels be unregarded, the pulse of confidence and strength beats high, and one hears the great voice, with that "fierceness" in it "which from tenderness was never far," promising that, if his masters will but trust to him and do as he bids, out of even this last fearful *impasse* he will find them the way.

First, he brought before them the aim and end of his plan—a better Constitution; that better Constitution to consist of Hereditary Royalty, and a Representative Government, other than the National Assembly. This Government must, and will, destroy privileges, exemptions, provincial bodies, bodies of clergy and possessors of fiefs "as political bodies in the State," "and many disastrous taxes"; but it will keep, what the National Assembly has already given, equal taxation, liberty of the press, and of religious opinions, the responsibility of all the agents of the executive power, the eligibility of all citizens for all employments, and a greater strictness in the administration of the public funds.

Then he considered the obstacles in the way of this better Constitution, and the means to overcome them.

The first obstacle is the indecision of the King's character. That must be worked on, and ruled, by the Queen and the ministers.

The next obstacle is the hatred with which her Majesty is regarded. That must be counteracted by those ministers investing her with their own popularity, and by her own conduct, which must be as wise as it has been foolish.

Then, there is the demagogism of Paris. To control this, first ruin the credit of the National Assembly in the provinces—by praising it, perhaps, and at the same time showing all its weaknesses—and then having formed a new legislative body, remove it from the capital to whose fatal influence are owing the corruption and the unruliness of the first Assembly.

The fourth obstacle is the spirit of the National Guard, which can be conquered by deposing Lafayette from its leadership and forming a military school.

The exceeding irritability of the present Assembly, which is obstacle five, can only be destroyed by leading on that Assembly, by unpopular measures and feeble decrees, to destroy itself.

The trend of public opinion must be influenced in the right direction by secret agents, skilful journalism and paid demagogues. The monarchy, with the new legislative body, must take the place and popularity of the National Assembly, and save the kingdom if it would save the King.

This Plan—of which only the barest outline has been given—was communicated, piece by piece, by

La Marck to the Queen, whom Mirabeau justly declared to be "the strongest part of the government," and to Montmorin, who was certainly one of the weakest parts. The King, indeed, was regarded by every one so much as a cipher, that Mirabeau did not intend the *View* to be seen by him at all. But he did see it, and his own character described with that refreshing candour of speech for which his great adviser had long been celebrated.

The *View* ends with a stern peroration, which La Marck read both to Louis and to Marie-Antoinette.

"If this Plan is followed, one may hope everything; if it is not, if this last plank of rescue fails us, there is no misfortune, from individual assassination to general pillage, from the fall of the throne to the dissolution of the empire, which we may not expect."

Then, with a dreadful clearness, the writer set forth the daily increasing ferocity of the people, and their daily increasing hatred of the royal family, the bitterness and evil disposition of the Assembly, and the ominous fact that a massacre of clergy and nobles was "openly discussed."

> Unhappy nation! . . . weak but virtuous King! unfortunate Queen! this is the fearful abyss to which a blind confidence or an exaggerated mistrust has led you. One effort remains to be made—but it is the last. If it is abandoned, or fails, a funeral pall will fall on this kingdom. What will be its fate? Whither will drift the vessel, stricken by the thunderbolt and beaten by the storm? I do not know; but if I myself escape from the general shipwreck, I shall always say with pride in my retirement, "I exposed myself to ruin to save them all, and they would not be saved."

The Queen was profoundly moved. The poor King considered that Mirabeau "exaggerated" the situation. But by his wife, by La Marck, by Montmorin, continually coming back to the charge, he was brought gradually to see that the horror of his circumstances was such that exaggeration was scarcely possible, and that to accept Mirabeau and his Plan, "in its details and in its whole," was indeed the "last plank of rescue."

It is easy now, and it was easy then, to criticise that great and famous scheme. La Marck at one time thought he detected in it a desire on Mirabeau's part to urge others forward and himself keep in the background, "that he might have the credit of success without endangering his popularity." A sounder objection, which both he and Mercy-Argenteau, with whom he was in constant correspondence, brought against it, was that it was too complicated, that it demanded in the agents who were to work it an ability and fidelity they were little likely to possess. La Marck added that between the superb confidence and cleverness of its great originator and the timidity of his first lieutenant, Montmorin, "there is a great void which is filled by no one."

But the greatest of all drawbacks to the success of the Plan was, after all, inevitable.

It depended for commandership solely upon the brains and character of Mirabeau; it had so to depend because, in all the kingdom, there was no other general who could lead that forlorn hope to success; and Mirabeau's life was failing fast.

CHAPTER XXV

THE ZENITH

By the beginning of the year 1791 Mirabeau may be said to have reached the supreme height of his fame.

Scarcely forty-two years old, in that age of the precocity of genius—the age which saw Charles James Fox a distinguished speaker at twenty, and the younger Pitt, Prime Minister of Great Britain at twenty-four—he can hardly be said to have won his laurels young. But into those two-and-forty years he had compressed such a hurly-burly of vicissitudes and passions, such brimming measure of labour and dissipation, achievements so great, projects so much greater, and now such a blaze and fever of notoriety, that, beside his, the most dazzling and meteoric of all other political careers are tame and empty.

His fame had gone into all lands, and his voice to the ends of the world. From that England—which, only seven years earlier, had known him as a disreputable and obstreperous ne'er-do-weel, the *gêne,* and the terror even, of his friends—Pitt, as has been seen, now sent to him one of those friends on a careful embassy of conciliation.

At Cambridge, in the summer of 1790, the under-

graduate admirers of the Revolution had given a dinner in its honour, and the toast "To Mirabeau, and the success of eloquence in the cause of liberty."

Dumont declared he was the subject of the conversation of all Europe, and that his expressions had become household words. Foreigners visiting Paris had him pointed out to them as one of the sights of the capital; and the stranger at the Assembly looked first, or looked only, for that giant head and frame.

In provinces as far off and infinitely less enlightened than the proud Provence which had bred him, his name was in every mouth. The postilions at the inns used to call their chief horse—which did all the work—their "Mirabeau."

But if he was famous in France, in Paris he was a *furore*. Crowds of adoring young men would wait outside his house and accompany him in a sort of triumphal procession to the Assembly.

His gaudy equipage, a "vis-à-vis bleu rayé," completely eclipsed the famous white horse of the head of the National Guard, and in these days it was not Lafayette, picturesque and romantic, whom men went out for to see, but he who had described himself, in answer to the letter of some adoring woman begging an account of the looks of King Mirabeau, as "a tiger that had had the smallpox."

In the Assembly now, even the Right heard and applauded him; and many Royalists, knowing nothing of his connection with the Court, were glad to meet him in Caroline du Saillant's *salon,* in the house which had been the old Marquis's, the Hôtel Mirabeau, in the Rue de Seine.

But it was in the privacy—only the word is a

misnomer—of his own home that he attracted most public attention.

The house in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin is described by some authorities as a " chétive maison " and by others as a sumptuous and luxurious palace, according to their wish to prove Mirabeau's prudence or extravagance—his wise or foolish use of the subsidies of the Court.

The reader who visits that crowded and busy street, and looks at No. 42—its ground floor is now occupied by the " Bouillon Mirabeau "—will probably come to the conclusion that the house is neither mean nor magnificent, but must rather have been, in the days when the Chaussée d'Antin was a fashionable quarter, the abode of a man of moderate wealth.

The truth really was that in Mirabeau's position—Mirabeau known to be chronically poor and riddled with debt, and wishing to keep secret his paid services to royalty—the smallest display was inconceivably rash.

But caution of any kind was as impossible to him now, as it had been impossible to him all his life. He was not only being lavishly paid, but, like another celebrated character, he asked for more. Not, indeed, that now or ever he loved money, but that now as ever he loved spending it and hated thinking about it. As in the old days when his louis were few, not all Madame de Nehra's gentle persuasions could keep him from the imprudence of buying anything that took his impulsive fancy, so now, when louis were many and the imprudence far greater, he bought, not indeed very lavishly, but just as they took his fancy, books, flowers, pictures, statuary, jewelry. One of

his purchases was a part of the rare and valuable library of Buffon—Buffon, who, in the strange irony of fate, had so nearly married Sophie de Monnier. For flowers he had ever a bizarre love—or rather a love which was not bizarre at all, but, considering his passionate reverence for everything lovely and simple that his own character most lacked, was natural. One night he displayed a casket of jewels to Dumont and some other friends who had been dining with him—an indiscretion which the Genevese naturally and rightly lamented, for this was indeed "proclamer la liste civile."

But Mirabeau's real extravagance was in the conduct of the house, or rather, in its lack of conduct.

From seven o'clock in the morning there was a constant levée until he went to the Assembly, through the crowds waiting to see him pass. The table, at which there were always guests in abundance, was profuse in rich meats and wines—not studied grandeur, but a careless and hospitable generosity quite as costly. As a host, Mirabeau was irresistible, full of wit and *bonhomie,* and, far better, talking to each friend the language of that friend's heart. The servants only appeared between the courses. Mirabeau still kept Legrain, who had continued to give every dissatisfaction for ten years—or, rather, who would have given dissatisfaction to any other master but one who did not mind being robbed if he was loved, and found ample compensation for bad service in still being addressed as M. le Comte. He had exchanged his valet, Boyer, for a certain Theis, an ex-smuggler, who expected, as a right and privilege, a friendly kick or blow from his master during his elaborate

toilet. When, plunged in thought, Mirabeau omitted these attentions, Theis was cruelly disappointed—"M. le Comte takes no notice of me . . . M. le Comte has been so serious all this week!"

In the background were, of course, other servants, who no doubt recouped themselves for erratically paid wages, and took advantage of their master's absorption in greater things than the peccadilloes of their tribe.

But he was not long content with a town-house only.

The fact that La Marck had assured him in the beginning of 1791 that it would be more prudent to buy Versailles in six months' time than a hovel now, did not prevent him from signing, a month later, the contract of purchase of the Château de Marais at Argenteuil—a charming property once owned by Helvétius, with woods, waters, and a seventeenth-century garden—which Mirabeau had for some time leased, and where he had been accustomed to go all through the autumn of 1790 for brief holidays and week-ends with "a wild mistress, a staunch friend or two."

Le Marais may be said to have been his last toy. He had always loved Argenteuil, though he had been often wretched enough at his father's house there. At Le Marais he amused himself by building and improving; raised in the garden a statue to Liberty —"the first divinity of his heart"—with a sword, symbolically wrapped in the book of the law, in her hand; and took the greatest interest in flowers—"the poetry of gardens." He gave the Curé of Argenteuil letters of exchange by which such of the poor as could

not work were to be provided with bread, linen, and other necessaries.

After Mirabeau's death, La Marck wrote of him that he " carried to his grave the consolation of having had many friends." At this apex of his fortunes—although in most cases not because he *was* at their apex—they were much about him.

Of his own people, indeed, his wife made a few overtures of reconciliation which were firmly refused. Louise de Cabris, having quarrelled with him in his obscurity, did not seek to be reconciled to him in his fame; Tonneau had emigrated in August, 1790, to the safe side of the Rhine; the good Bailli was in Provence, so that there only remained Caroline and her children to be the near witnesses of his last triumphs.

But, of his friends, La Marck loved him to the end with a fervour foreign to his calm nature. Constant alike in their affections and their work were the sentimentally devoted secretary, Comps, the more reserved and discreet secretary, Pellenc, and the ardent Frochot. Dumont, jealous but faithful, was Mirabeau's intimate to the end; but in these latter days, his place and Duroveray's as collaborators were taken by the cold and judicious Reybaz, publicist and Swiss pastor. Clavière, Mirabeau's old friend and helper of the days of the pamphlets on stock-jobbing, was his friend still, despite frequent quarrels, and rated Mirabeau's value to his country so high that he told Dumont, who had been lamenting the injudicious pomp and extravagance of the household in the Chaussée d'Antin, that if Mirabeau cost the nation a million it would be well employed.

For the serene and high-minded Marquis de Condorcet, a newly-made friend, Mirabeau tried to procure a place in the Treasury; for Condorcet's wife he had, as had his rival Lafayette, a well-merited admiration.

The Marquise de Condorcet is one of the very few women, alas! with whom Mirabeau's name is connected innocently. At this very time he had a *liaison* (it lasted five months) with a Madame Armande Rollande, who, in her *Souvenirs sur Mirabeau,* has left something that is interesting about Mirabeau, amid a great deal that is not interesting about herself. She was often with him at La Marais in the autumn of 1790. She speaks of his "boundless devotion" to her interests, and of "the delirium and fever" of his attachment to her. But it was interrupted by a brief, mad passion for Mademoiselle Morichelli, the *prima donna* of the Italian opera, who was as ugly as she was charming and clever. Through all, the cunning and determined Madame Lejay kept fast the cords that bound to her chariot-wheels the greatest man in France. He did not now even try to free himself. The "ill uses" of his life arose and cried, "Thou hast made us lords, and canst not put us down"; and he knew that Henriette de Nehra was gone from him for ever.

There was one new friend whom, in these gaudy days, he had painful reason to see often. Since 1789 he had, to the regret of Madame de Nehra, given up Dr. Baignières, his old medical adviser, and was attended instead by the doctors Chevetel and Jaubert —Jaubert being the brother of the *avocat* who had

rendered Mirabeau assistance in the lawsuit against his wife.

In 1791, he first sent for Dr. Cabanis, not because he was a clever doctor, although he *was* very clever, but because he was a philosopher, wit, and man of letters, the friend of Condorcet, Turgot, and Franklin, and also—the usual attraction of opposites for poor Mirabeau—of high principles and character.

Cabanis found his patient suffering not only from ophthalmia, but, very often, acute pain from the internal complaint which, in 1788, when he was in the hands of Dr. Baignières, had been called a cholera morbus, was now called colic, and most likely was neither. The dissipations of prosperity did not improve Mirabeau's condition. Excess in every sensual indulgence save drink, and a life which had room in it neither for calm, for solitude, nor for repose, would have been enough to ruin his health if it had not been ruined already, and if to the follies of pleasures and the labours of deputyship had not been added the fearful responsibility of his position as adviser to the Court.

In this hour of his fame, those labours and responsibilities settled upon him as thick as swarming bees.

It has been seen how, in 1789, Mirabeau had addressed himself to the burning question of Church property. When, in July, 1790, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was finally decreed—a decree which practically destroyed all the old ecclesiastical institutions, and made the offices of bishops and clergy elective—the storm of rage and opposition it raised was so fierce that Mirabeau, though himself approving of

the measure, at once saw the necessity of a pacific compromise.

On November 26, 1790, a deputy, Viodel, had proposed to the Assembly certain severe proceedings to be taken against the refractory clergy who refused to take the new vows. Mirabeau supported Viodel in a speech of studied violence—a violence which he hoped would disgust the Assembly and result in the rejection of the measure. But, unluckily, he was taken at his word, not at his intention. Viodel's proposition was passed, and much of the angry aloofness of the Court towards Mirabeau during this autumn was due to his too subtle and well-meant speech of November 26th.

The King, " whispering ' I will ne'er consent,' consented " formally to Viodel's measure in December, and now, on January 14, 1791, Mirabeau read to the House his *Instruction on the Clergy* which was designed to explain to the nation the action of the Assembly towards the whole religious question.

The Abbé Lamourette had supplied the Church history and theological data, but its persuasive eloquence is Mirabeau's alone, and one sees in it once more that sympathetic understanding of the enemy's point of view which made him at once so formidable and forgivable an opponent. Yet, not the less, it denounced so trenchantly State religion and the efforts of the priests " to restore the double tyranny of the throne and the altar " that it raised not only the scornful laughter of the Right, but sometimes the deep murmurs of the Left, and was finally voted immoderate, and rejected.

Of course Mirabeau printed and published it, and

swore lustily there was not a line or an expression in it for which he would not stake his honour and his neck. But Dumont says that he was really dissatisfied with the part he had taken; and he certainly had to write several *Notes* to persuade the Court that he had only been trying to lead the Assembly to a suicidal policy—to make it pass such inexorable laws against religion as should turn great bodies of men and a vast public opinion to the King.

After January 26th, Mirabeau never spoke again on religious questions.

He was soon busy counteracting the unpopularity of those Church speeches with the Court, with many of his own friends, and with an Assembly who might, or might not, elect him its president. For though popularity was never Mirabeau's end, it was often his best means to an end.

He " cleaned the slate " with one sweep of the arm when, on January 28th, he presented a Report on Foreign Affairs, in which he calmed the wrath of a people just beginning to suspect the King of intrigues with the *émigrés* and foreign powers; showed how those foreign powers desired peace as much as France —especially England, " with whom one must lay the bases of an eternal friendship " (here, perhaps, spoke the influence of Hugh Elliot) ; and declared that from the enlightenment of Great Britain nothing was to be feared but the " manœuvres sourdes " and " moyens secrets " of a few of her ill-disposed politicians (which, despite Hugh Elliot, certainly meant Pitt).

The speech finished with a proposition for a better supply of armaments—the best way to make certain that there would be no need to use them.

The man in the street was delighted to be reassured as to the King's designs; the King was delighted with the reassurance; and the Assembly, the very day after his speech, rewarded the assurer by electing him president.

Certainly, if that election had been always fairly and impartially conducted, Mirabeau, who had so long been the virtual head of the House, would long before this have had the honour of being its nominal head also.

But in December, 1790, personal feeling had procured the post for M. d'André. On January 3d—the president only held office for a fortnight—Mirabeau had lost it by three votes. On January 17th, his *Instruction on the Clergy* had spelt another defeat for him. (The next day he had been somewhat solaced by being made Commander of the National Guard of his district.)

Now, on January 29th, he was elected president without opposition.

It was perfectly characteristic of him—consistent with his inconsistency—that, although he was at the time doing his best to cause the Assembly to bring about its own destruction, he was not the less quite delighted to be made its president; that, in his hands the office acquired a dignity it had never had before; and that under his firm and vigorous rule the House did quite double its usual amount of work. True, during his fortnight he was often in great physical pain, but he was not the less constant at his post or the less equal to its requirements. Mirabeau's little bell never tinkled in vain for order, as Bailly's had done. The gibes of the Right were struck into

silence by the contempt in his eyes; the unruly Left acknowleged a master. He certainly outstepped his presidential powers, as a Mirabeau needs must. But the office also gave him the opportunity not only of making a barren glory fruitful, but of exercising to the full that *politesse du cœur* in which no man was his superior.

One day an old deputy (Tronchet) was mumbling out a long report of mediocre interest, to the noisy impatience of the House. "Gentlemen," says M. le Président, "will you be so good as to remark that M. Tronchet's chest is not so strong as his head?"

Another day, Mirabeau, walking home from the Assembly with Frochot, who served him diligently in his presidential labours, turns to the young man with, "You and I, Frochot, preside rather well."

Dr. Cabanis declared that his great patient was incapable of making his very enemies suffer "from the superiority of his position or even of his talent."

During his presidential fortnight, Mirabeau received various deputations—notably one from the Quakers—and replied to them in the happiest of brief speeches.

But, if his presidency was a crown to his labours the crowning hour was to come.

Towards the end of January, Paris was vividly agitated by the rumour of the coming flight from the country of Mesdames, the King's aunts—those poor, dull, ugly old ladies, the "Loque" and "Graille" of their uncourteous royal father—leaving behind them, said Marat, in his highly inflammatory newspaper, *L'Ami du Peuple,* three millions of debts, taking with

them twelve millions in gold, "and most likely the Dauphin as well."

The President of the Assembly immediately added to his presidential labours by writing, on February 3d, a *Note for the Court,* in which he pointed out that evilly disposed persons (and so many were evilly disposed to his Majesty by now) would see in this departure certain presage of the King's, that hungry and wrathful Paris would not bear tamely an exodus which would deprive it of so much gold, and that if Mesdames were arrested on the frontier there would be a new ground of rage and calumny against the Court. The writer went on to tell the King that, since he had not been politic enough to gain popularity by forbidding Mesdames to go while he could, the only thing to be done now was to inform the Assembly that he had not forbidden them for fear of exceeding his powers, and then to ask the House for a decree defining those powers over his relations. For this, says Mirabeau, will not merely lull suspicion, but will embarrass the Assembly, and lead it to some foolish and suicidal measure—which is what we want.

Most prophets are prudent enough only to indulge in prophecies so vague and general that, with a little generosity in interpretation, they are pretty sure to come true. But Mirabeau, in this Fiftieth *Note* predicted in detail, and was justified to the letter.

That the King would soon follow Mesdames' example, *was* in all men's mouths.

On February 14th, the irritation of Paris became open riot.

On February 20th, Mesdames were stopped in their journey at Arnay-le-Duc—practically arrested

by a resolute mob, infuriated with a king who had permitted their emigration, and determined to stop it until the Assembly had declared it legal.

Mirabeau might have gone on to prophesy, very safely, that the King would not take his advice with regard to his explanations to his Parliament. Louis missed that opportunity—as he missed every opportunity. He was already lending his ear to the counsels of another adviser—not Bergasse this time, but Breteuil.

When, on February 27th, the Assembly were heatedly discussing the question of this emigration, Mirabeau again found it demanded of him—it was the chief business of his statesmanship, as it has been the principal concern of some of the noblest of human lives—to make the best of a bad bargain. Folly as he thought it to have let Mesdames go, it remained now to him to show that there was no law against their going. "Is it a fact? is there such a law?"

"Yes," says a deputy, M. Gourdan, in one of those clap-trap phrases the Revolution loved, "there is . . . the welfare of the people."

And Mirabeau replied with a haughty scorn that the welfare of the people was not in the least concerned that Mesdames should stop two or three times on their travels, that their emigration was a thing imprudent and impolitic, but not illegal, and that the affair should be taken in hand, not by the Assembly at all, but by the executive.

His proposition was adopted—with the eventual sequel that Arnay-le-Duc permitted the fugitives "to say their prayers in Rome" as they desired, and with the immediate sequel that the revolutionary press

turned upon Mirabeau with a volley of its choicest adjectives. "Contradictory, heterodox . . . ministerial . . . Jacobin *indigne,*" were the phrases that hot foe and friend, Desmoulins, hurled at him.

On February 28th, the House was stormily discussing, not the legality of the emigration of the two royal aunts—which, to be sure, was a small thing—but the vast question which rose from it, the Legality of Emigration generally.

Mirabeau began by reading a vehement passage from that *Letter to Frederick William II. of Prussia* which he had written in 1786, and which still expressed his views that "man is not rooted to the earth; he does not belong to the land; he will never be persuaded that his masters have a right to chain him to the country." Then he declared the project of Le Chapellier, which was before the House, "that in times of trouble, or on a declaration of the Assembly, the establishment of a council of three may exercise the right of forbidding persons to leave or enter the kingdom," was "barbarous and unpractical . . . and proved to be so by the experience of all time."

To the loud murmurs of the Left, he ended with the proud words, "The popularity I have sought and enjoyed is no feeble reed; it is in the land that I would fain sink its roots on the immovable basis of right and liberty. If you make a law against emigrants, I swear I will never obey it!"

A deputy, Vernier, then moved that the question should be adjourned. When Mirabeau thrust his way to the tribune to support the adjournment, without waiting for the formality of the President's permission to speak, the murmurs became a howl, and

Goupil, an old enemy, called out, "What is the right of dictatorship that M. Mirabeau exercises in this Assembly?"

"M. le Président," says Mirabeau, "I beg those who interrupt me to remember that I have fought against despotism all my life, and shall fight it for ever."

Then, as the Left, or rather some thirty of them including the Lameths and Barnave, tried to drown his voice with tumult—to rule the Assembly by noise as they could not rule it by reason—he flung at them, with that rage no man dared face, the famous apostrophe, "Silence, you thirty voices!" and they were silent.

Vernier's motion for an adjournment was carried. Mirabeau so far won his point that no law against emigration was passed until after his death. But more than that, in this last blow struck for individual liberty he had shown that between it and the royal authority there need be no enmity, and that the despotism of the many was as dangerous to freedom as the despotism of one.

When he left the tumult of the Assembly, he found without the riots of the "Day of Daggers."

In the morning the wild men of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine had attacked the Château of Vincennes. Lafayette, arriving with the military, presently beat back the insurgents, and returned to Paris in time to disarm some six hundred royalist gentlemen who had gone to the Tuileries to rescue the King. Saint-Antoine had barred her gates against Lafayette and his soldiers, and the whole city was in a ferment.

Who could restore order save he who had calmed Aix and Marseilles? In the *Proclamation* Mirabeau wrote, or edited, he spoke, as he had spoken in that *Avis au Peuple Marseillais,* not as cold authority to hot insurgence, but as a father pleading with his children, and with the strong persuasiveness of real interest and affection.

That night, he had been engaged to dine with twelve of his *confrères* at the Duc d'Aiguillon's. But the *confrères* and the host were of the party he had offended in the morning. The guests refused to meet him; and Mirabeau, going to the Duke's house at the hour appointed, had the door shut in his face.

The insult was like the call of the bugles to the war-horse; Mirabeau went straightway into the teeth of the enemy—to the Jacobin Club.

> I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
> The best and the last!

The moment he entered the hall, Duport rose to denounce both him and Lafayette, accusing them of a plot to steal the King from Paris, as the first step in a counter-revolution. Lameth, with all the venom of malice and truth, cast up against Mirabeau the sins of his youth.

When he rose to reply, howls, curses, laughter—the bitterest contempt and rancour—would fain have beaten him back. The President tried to prevent him reaching the tribune by declaring the meeting at an end.

But that " indomitable will " brooked no obstacle.

At first, deeply troubled and with great drops of sweat standing on his brow, he replied with difficulty,

GABRIEL-HONORÉ DE RIQUETTI, COMTE DE MIRABEAU.

From an Old Print.

separating his cause from Lafayette's, and nobly defending his rival.

But, as he went on, the old mastery returned, and with wave upon wave of eloquence, he swept back the accusations of his foes; and then, with that marvellous self-control and that total lack of all spite and bitterness, turned aside, as an eye-witness put it, "in the full tide of victory, to impress upon his hearers political truths."

The turbulent Jacobins paid him the highest of all compliments—reluctant applause and admiration. To that music, he left their Club, never to enter it again.

Yet it is not those he conquered who need one's sympathy. Ordinary men, they could seek the consolation of their fellows; but to be great is to be always alone.

Aloof, brooding, suffering, Mirabeau knew, through the glory of those successes, through the mad riot of pleasures by night which followed the mad riot of labour by day, that his own death-warrant, long prepared, was signed, and that with his fall would fall his country.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE DYING OF MIRABEAU

THE plan for the salvation of the kingdom and her monarchy, which Mirabeau had drawn out in the *View of the Situation of France* in December, was now at work; and Mirabeau was expending on it the royal money with more than royal lavishness.

The organisation of secret agents was working well; Paris was better disposed to the King and Queen, and the National Assembly something less demagogic. The chief obstacle in the way of success was indeed the usual obstacle—the shiftiness and the inertia of the Court; to which might now be added the tardiness and feebleness of Montmorin. Sometimes Mirabeau was sorely tempted, said La Marck, "to despair entirely of the Tuileries"; but at all times, in the phrase of Madame de Staël, he was resolved to be "its master and not its instrument."

Early in 1791, a last scheme occurred to him, which was a development of the schemes set forth in the *View,* as well as of the suggestion made in the *Memoir for Monsieur* of a temporary residence in Rouen, and of the suggestion in the Eleventh *Note for the Court,* written after the interview with the Queen, of a residence in Fontainebleau.

The staunch and moderate Marquis de Bouillé, who had so firmly repressed the mutiny at Brest, was at once a cousin of Lafayette, governor of Metz, and in command of the loyal regiments there.

An idea! an idea! Mirabeau could now influence, or felt confident he could influence, thirty-six of the departments to demand the dissolution of the Assembly and the appointment of a new legislature. About six departments on the eastern frontier Bouillé could influence to a like end.

Then, in a solemn and stately procession, with his National Guard surrounding him and Lafayette in command on his great white horse, King and Queen shall leave the capital. At Compiègne or Fontainebleau, Bouillé and his loyal army shall meet them. In case of necessity, the whole cavalcade shall proceed to Metz. At Compiègne, Fontainebleau—or Metz, as a last resource—with a new parliament, and far from the demagogism of the capital, monarchy shall take up its permanent abode and work out its last chance.

On February 6th, the ever useful La Marck reached Metz, as emissary of the King and of Mirabeau to Bouillé. That stalwart soldier finally approved the plan La Marck set forth, and expressed his faith as rooted in Mirabeau, not in his cousin, Lafayette.

Two days later, Mirabeau and Lafayette met—it was their last meeting—and discussed the subject. La Marck returned to Paris. Success seemed so hopeful, that Mirabeau began preparing the Proclamation the King was to address to his subjects directly he was free. The great adviser did not

hesitate to say that, if the scheme fell through, civil war would be the least of evils the King would have to choose.

Though it is thought that Mirabeau had overestimated his influence in the provinces, and though Lafayette was ever a dangerous aide-de-camp, all might have been well, but for two things—the fatal Bourbon characteristics and the Hand of God.

The royal family was already almost persuaded by Breteuil to that "suicide of royalty," the secret flight from the country, which, says Cabanis, Mirabeau, dying and foreseeing, declared would have made him "mount the tribune, announce the throne vacant, and proclaim a republic."

The Hand of God was upon Mirabeau himself.

In the beginning of February, he had bidden goodbye to Dumont, who was going to Geneva, saying, "We shall never see each other again," and prophesying not broadly, but specifically, the red anarchy of the Terror. Two days after his speech on the Emigration question, he suffered a languor, for which he could not account. There were whispers of poison. Caroline du Saillant made him throw away the presents of wines and liqueurs which he often received; and if he dined from home, it was nearly always at her house or at Madame d'Aragon's. The poison was, indeed, the poison of his own evil living: he had sown to the flesh, and literally reaped corruption. The Marquis de Ferrières says that at this time a mad orgy at the house of La Couton, a dancer at the opera, at which "he united all kinds of excess to all the means of exciting it," gave him his "deathblow."

Towards the end of March, the Assembly reverted to the question of a Regency—should such a Regency be elective, or hereditary, that is, given to the nearest relation of the child-sovereign? Mirabeau's sufferings were by now so great that Cazalès begged the discussion might be adjourned, as the House of Commons had once adjourned a debate on account of the illness of Fox. The Assembly refused.

On March 23d, Mirabeau made a speech which is as certainly in favour of an Elective Regency, as it is certain that the very next day he wrote from the Assembly to La Marck that an Elective Regency would be "the destruction of monarchy," and that he recorded his vote in favour of the Hereditary Regency which eventually became law.

Some critics consider this facing-both-ways to be in the nature of the ruse which he had employed, very unsuccessfully, in his speech supporting Viodel's measure for dealing with the refractory clergy. Loménie, much more plausibly, sees in it the sickness of the body clouding the mind. The truth will never be positively known.

He was so wretchedly ill by the time the Regency discussion was finished that for the moment he could do no more. He went down to Le Marais for the week-end, and there, away from Dr. Cabanis's assistance, had a violent attack of pain, early in the morning of Sunday, March 27th.

But that day the Assembly was to resume a debate, in which Mirabeau had already joined, on Mines, a subject which, although Dumont declared Mirabeau knew nothing at all about it, was of great interest to him, because it affected the property of

La Marck. So, at the urgent bidding of the soul, he ignored the sufferings of the body—a heroism of which the painful and glorious opportunity is at some time given to most men—returned at nine o'clock on that Sunday morning to Paris, and having stayed awhile, utterly exhausted, at La Marck's house in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, went on, in spite of La Marck's entreaties, to the Assembly. Five times he mounted the tribune and, in the teeth of a lively opposition, gained his last victory, and proved, even to his enemies, that if he was a bad man, he was a good friend.

But he had tried himself too far. He staggered on the terrace of the Feuillans—where as usual a crowd pressed about him, congratulating him and trying to present him with petitions—saying to Lachèze, Cabanis's young partner, who had come to his assistance, "Get me away from here! I must have rest."

Lachèze took him back to Argenteuil, but the next day he returned to the Chaussée d'Antin, and felt so much better that that night he actually appeared in his box at the Italian opera. There the pain siezed on him again like a vise; and he could hardly drag himself home on Lachèze's arm—having refused to wait for his carriage lest the sight of his sufferings should trouble his friends.

At his house, which he never left again, Cabanis, hurriedly summoned, administered powerful remedies. Mirabeau himself said he could not live many hours in torments so fearful; but the remedies restored him for the time so well, that the next day he thought himself out of danger, and plunged into

schemes and thoughts for his country with his old brilliancy and vigour. But on March 30th, the symptoms returned in full violence.

By now, the Chaussée d'Antin was thronged with inquirers—a crowd quiet and sympathetic, who had itself barricaded the street against traffic, insisted that the theatres should be closed, and when a mistaken fine lady gave a ball at a neighbouring house, took upon itself to reprove her bad taste by maltreating her guests. Bulletins were issued several times a day, and knots of men discussed them, in low, anxious tones. The street became, says one authority, "a neutral and friendly territory where the bitterest opponents met peacefully," united by a common sorrow. The King sent twice a day to inquire, openly; and secretly much more often. The Jacobin Society of the Friends of the Constitution despatched a deputation, headed by Barnave, to express sympathy. When the patient was told that Alexandre de Lameth had refused to be of the deputation, he observed simply that he knew Lameth to be a rebel, but had not been aware that he was a fool.

That the sympathy and tenderness of the people were balm and solace to the sufferer, was but natural. He, who had loved them too well not to see and reprove their follies, could speak of them honestly to Cabanis as a "good and sensible people." "It was glorious to devote my life to them; it is sweet to die in their midst."

In the sick chamber itself, Henriette, Legrain's wife—how many tender and poignant memories her name must have suggested!—was a devoted nurse. Theis the valet, Caroline du Saillant, Pellenc, Comps,

and Frochot were much in the room. Once, when Frochot gently raised the sick man's head—"I wish I could leave it to one of you as a legacy," said he. That *mot* has at least *vraisemblance.* Many, reported of this death-bed, are manifestly exaggeration or invention.

In the house, but still too young—he was now nine years old—to be admitted often to the sick-room, was little Lucas de Montigny, whom in these latter years the biographers almost ignore, but who had undoubtedly, through struggles and glory alike, a large place in Mirabeau's life and heart.

La Marck called constantly for news of his friend, but at first would not come in, fearing to tire or agitate him.

But on March 31st, Mirabeau "asked for him every moment," and they had a long interview.

La Marck begged Mirabeau to destroy the *Notes for the Court,* which the Court having returned to him, he had carefully kept. The dying man objected. They contained, he said, "everything that would have made me great in the future, and you want me to sacrifice it!" La Marck urged warmly upon him that their preservation might endanger the King and the Queen, and that so great a denial was worthy a great nature. With a strong effort, Mirabeau consented; then, as La Marck was leaving the room, the sick man, recalling a recent conversation they had had together on noble dying, called him back: "Now, my dear connoisseur in fine deaths, are you satisfied?" On the day of Mirabeau's death, at his command, Pellenc sorted the *Notes,* destroyed many, and took the residue to La Marck. That residue La Marck

eventually gave to Bacourt, who published them, after La Marck's death.

By the next day, Friday, April 1st, Mirabeau's condition was so alarming, and the pain he suffered so cruel, that, despite his wishes—he had declared, quite characteristically, that he was determined Cabanis and Lachèze having had all the trouble of his illness should have all the credit of his recovery—the celebrated Dr. Petit was called in. Petit reassured the patient—or tried to; for now Mirabeau felt within himself that no recovery was possible.

That afternoon—his mind was still perfectly clear and strong—he sent for his solicitor and made his will.

At daybreak on Saturday, April 2d, he had the shutters thrown back, the windows opened, and his bed moved into the gay spring sunshine. He inquired with all his old consideration after Theis, who had been ill. He had long talks with Cabanis, La Marck, and Frochot, gave them his last wishes, and spoke to them "of persons dear to him and public matters on which he dwelt long." Dr. Cabanis says that at the approach of death his thoughts took "a vaster and deeper turn." But it was not the darkness in front, but the light behind, not the dim world into which he was going, but the actual, breathing world which he was leaving, of which Mirabeau thought to the end.

That afternoon, Talleyrand came to see him.

Too wary and circumspect to have openly quarrelled with so powerful a personage as the great tribune of these last years, Talleyrand—ever, as Napoleon said, in conspiracy with fortune—now decided that the moment had come when the breach

between them, caused by the publication of the *Secret History,* could be very effectively spanned. It is thought that, in this last conversation, Mirabeau suggested to his old enemy that plan by which, forty years later, he achieved his greatest glory—an alliance between France and England. It is certain that Mirabeau was touched and pleased by the visit, and that the same day Talleyrand read to the Assembly a discourse Mirabeau had composed on the Freedom of Testation.

As evening came, the sufferer lost the power of speech. But through his torments he still smiled his thanks to the friends about him, and feared lest his sufferings should hurt, not himself, but them. To the last, he was proudly conscious that their eyes were upon him, and of the presence of the hushed crowds in the street without—to the last, had a strange pleasure in dying as a king dies, his every word noted, his every look treasured. "He dramatised his death," said Talleyrand. Yes! But vanity and heroism have often a common root.

Towards the end, he made signs for pen and paper, and wrote very legibly "Dormir." Petit and Cabanis, in pitying response, made up a strong decoction of opium to soothe him. About half-past eight he died in their arms.

In death, all the trouble and torture he had suffered left his face, and that furrowed ugliness, which his country had feared and loved, wore a smile as if he slept a sleep full of life and filled with dreams.

The next day, in the presence of many doctors, a post-mortem examination was held. That there were signs of poison in the body was not affirmed or

denied. The cause of death was most simply, and perhaps most truly, stated in the unprofessional words of Dumont: "An inflammation of the intestines, occasioned by excess."

When the will, made only two days before, was opened, it was found that Mirabeau had left La Marck and Frochot his executors, and young du Saillant, Caroline's son, his residuary legatee.

To La Marck he left all his papers relating to public affairs, as well as his service of silver plate and his rings, to be turned into money at La Marck's pleasure; and to Cabanis all his papers on law and literature.

Lucas de Montigny was to have twenty-four thousand livres, to be held in trust by La Marck until the boy was twenty.

To Madame de Nehra, Mirabeau bequeathed twenty thousand livres, and a like sum to Comps.

It was perfectly in keeping with Gabriel-Honoré's lifelong character, not only that, despite the payment of the Court, he should die insolvent, but that he should not have the slightest idea of the amount of his debts. In one of their last conversations, he had told La Marck that he believed the sale of his library and pictures would cover the legacies—which it did not. In that case, he begged La Marck to help him. That rare and faithful friend gladly paid them himself.

One clause in the will stated Mirabeau's desire that the ashes of his father and grandmother might be brought to the chapel of his house, Le Marais, and that his own might lie with theirs.

But this could not be.

It is at once one of the cruelties and consolations of life, that so few people are really missed, and that the widest voids left by death are filled so soon and so well. Mirabeau's case was an exception.

Madame de Staël speaks of the " terror " that overtook men's minds when they heard he was gone. No one, says the Marquis de Ferrières, dared to take up the sceptre he had laid down. " Had Mirabeau lived," writes Carlyle, " the History of France and of the World had been different."

For the King and Queen his loss was indeed irreparable. It may be that monarchy was sick unto death—in which case the ablest physician, even if his counsels be heeded, can achieve little. But it is certain that unhappy royalty spent the few months succeeding the demise of their great adviser in doing precisely what he had told them not to do, and that the result forms one of the most mournful of human tragedies.

His death abandoned the aristocrats, " who feared him and whom he had ruled," to their own follies.

As for the Assembly, it became as a ship without rudder or sails, until it drifted hopelessly to its doom.

The Revolution had lost, as one writer put it, " its Providence, and Mirabeau took with him all the good it might have produced."

As if to prove that he had had the whip-hand of anarchy, his body was hardly cold before the anarchical press spat at him its bitterest venom.

His own friends mourned him with no common sorrow; and his death not only roused the noisy emotion of Theis and Comps (who was with difficulty prevented from committing suicide), but shook La

Marck's steady self-control to tears, and evoked the grudging grief of Dumont—"I had loved him more than I knew." Frochot and the child Lucas de Montigny gave a lifelong devotion to his memory. "I leave all Europe to mourn a great man," wrote Madame de Nehra; "as for me, I weep for a friend."

If the reader does not feel in some degree as she felt, the fault, with all his faults, is not Mirabeau's, but his biographer's.

The people bewailed the death of their idol with the extravagant and touching grief of the simple. The dullest and most ignorant among them knew that a prince and a great man was fallen this day in Israel. The departments commanded public mourning. Busts and portraits of the dead man had a vast sale; odes and eulogies to his greatness abounded, and he was the subject—a very effective subject—of dramas and melodramas.

An enthusiastic deputation to the Assembly from one of the districts of Paris went so far as to speak of him as a "virtuous" citizen. "Mirabeau himself," said the deputy Brissot, "would have cut out that word."

But if he was not virtuous, he was, as has been said of Napoleon Bonaparte, as great as a man can be without virtue, and he had rendered services to his country which her warm heart could honour, if it could never repay.

In the Assembly, on April 3d, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld suggested that the new church of Sainte-Geneviève should become the sepulchre of great men, and that Mirabeau should be the first to lie there. The resolution was passed, with only three dissentients. It was further resolved that, until the

new church was ready, the body should lie in the old, and that the Panthéon should bear the motto it bears to-day:

"Aux Grands Hommes la Patrie reconnaissante."

On the afternoon of April 4th, there met, outside Mirabeau's house in the Chaussée d'Antin, deputies of every shade of opinion, Lafayette and a detachment of cavalry and infantry, members of various revolutionary clubs and societies, many clergy, all the King's ministers, save one, and the officers, the members, and the band of the National Guard. The dead man's body, with the civic crown on his head, was placed on a bier, and carried by twelve soldiers, the canopy above him being borne by four members of the Assembly.

At half-past five, in the sunshine of a brilliant spring day, that procession, followed by an immense host of people "with all its soul in its eyes," moved slowly, to a solemn music, through streets where the windows of every house were filled with sympathising spectators. The grief of the poor is best exemplified in a simple story. Some one blamed the authorities for having neglected to water the dusty roads through which the procession passed. "They were right," said an old woman in the crowd. "They counted on our tears."

At half-past eight, the church of Saint-Eustache, at the end of the Rue Montmartre, was reached; a funeral service, with full military honours, conducted; and Cerutti, of the *Letters to Cerutti,* the friend of Necker, declaimed an *éloge* of the dead man, "the first of Frenchmen."

Late at night, the cortège arrived at the church of Sainte-Geneviève, where the body lay until the Panthéon was ready.

But, even there, it had no abiding resting-place.

Swift on Mirabeau's death, and as, at least in part, its direct consequence, followed the fatal drama of Varennes, the dissolution of the Assembly, and, on August 10, 1792, the fall of monarchy. On that day, the King's safe in the Tuileries was broken open, and in it were discovered papers, not indeed by Mirabeau, for in his handwriting there was not one, but papers which, all the same, conclusively proved his connection with the Court.

With a howl of rage, the National Convention tore his body from the Panthéon (it was replaced by the body of Marat), and removed it by night, on September 21st, 1794, to the cemetery of St. Catherine, the burying-place of criminals, in the Faubourg Saint-Marcel.

Three years later, under the Directory, Mirabeau's "urne renversée" was restored to the Panthéon.

An anarchy which had not respected him in death was little likely to spare his relatives and friends in life.

His mother and Caroline du Saillant knew, and survived, the prisons of the Terror.

His mother's rival and supplanter, Madame de Pailly, they engulfed. After 1792 no trace of her can be found.

The Bailli, having lived to see the total destruction of that "good old *noblesse*" which he had loved and adorned, died in emigration at Malta.

Tonneau also died in emigration, at Fribourg-en-Brisgau, of the consequences of a drunken brawl.

Louise de Cabris, completely ruined by the Revolution, also emigrated, but eventually returned to France, and redeemed the follies of her youth by the devotion of her later years to her unhappy, mad husband.

During the Terror, Madame Lejay displayed great coolness and courage, and made a not dishonourable second marriage.

In the October following Mirabeau's death, La Marck, despairing of being of any further service to the royalty whom he had loved as well as he had loved liberty herself, left Paris, wrote later his Memoirs at Vienna, and finally died at Brussels in 1833.

Mirabeau's wife, who had never even heard of her husband's last illness until he was dead, married, less than a year later, the Comte della Rocca, of whom she was already and avowedly the mistress. The Revolution so cruelly reduced the Marignane riches that her father, as well as Émilie herself, was for a long time entirely dependent on the della Roccas. In 1798, della Rocca died. Émilie went back to Paris, took up her abode with the too tolerant Caroline in the Rue de Seine, and there, in the house of which the old Marquis de Mirabeau had once shut the door in her face, posed as the inconsolable widow —of his son! She died in 1800.

Madame de Nehra retired to a very quiet and modest life in Amsterdam. Mirabeau had no successor in her heart. She died in 1818, aged forty, having in her later years had some correspondence with Lafayette.

" The little Coco " was brought up by Caroline du Saillant with her own children. Frochot greatly in-

terested himself in the boy, and in 1815 took him to Provence. In 1821, Lucas de Montigny, with his mind already full of his lifelong labour of love, the *Mémoires* of his adopted father, bought the Château of Mirabeau, for an incredibly small sum, from a M. Morel, its then possessor. Its present lessee is the Comtesse Martel—better known as "Gyp," the novelist—who is the great-granddaughter of the Vicomte de Mirabeau—Tonneau—and so the great-great-niece of Mirabeau himself.

It has been seen what Mirabeau was for France and for his own generation—the bold and able driver of that chariot of Revolution, whose wild team, had he lived, he might yet have taken safely past the precipice of anarchy, straight to the broad highway of order and liberty.

But his was a greatness which is not for an age, but for all time.

True, as a writer, for most men, unless it be as the author of a few fervid love-letters, he does not live at all. For, though he wrote much, he wrote only when his strong energies and sagacity could find no other means of stirring and informing his fellows.

Nor is it even as an orator that he demands recognition now. The magician with his wand is gone behind the black curtain, and the warmest eloquence, printed, loses half its glow.

But in a day when, for good or evil, nearly every man is, as Mirabeau wished he might be, either "elector or elected"—a day of schemes for the quick perfectibility of everybody, less wild, but even more generous, than the schemes of the French Revolution—there is surely a special need of a practical recol-

lection of the broad sobriety of judgment, the ready acceptance of that compromise without which no great alteration in human affairs has ever been achieved, and that piercing and unerring outlook into far consequences, of him, who was not the subtlest or the adroitest, but the wisest of the statesmen of France.

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